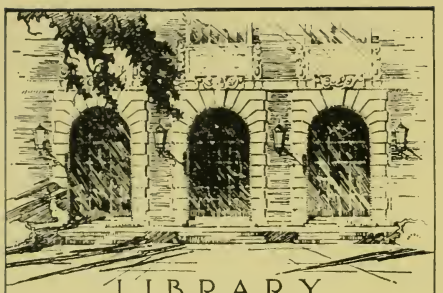

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MARJORY:

A Study.

MARJORY:

A STUDY.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "JAMES GORDON'S WIFE."

— Do not fear to hope! Can poet's brain
More than the father's heart rich good invent?
* * * * * *
Be bounteous in thy faith, for not misspent
Is confidence unto the Father lent.

GEORGE MACDONALD.

VOLUME II.

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MARJORY.

CHAPTER I.

"How shall I gain
The right to disdain?
The right to look down
With a saint-like frown
Upon sorrow and sin?
How shall I win
The right to scorn
My brother forlorn,
Or pass him by
With reproving eye,
As much as to say,
'Get out of the way,
And taint me not
With the poison spot
That comes from thy heart, thy face, thy brow,
To me, much holier than thou!'"—*C. M.*

Late in the afternoon of the next day, when Gerald had returned from the bank, Lina and her stepmother made their promised call. Mrs. Peele was a little woman, plain in face and quiet in manner, evidently relying on and looking up to Lina, just as Marjory had

seen done by all the world, ever since the first day of their acquaintance. As Lina entered, Marjory was struck afresh by her great beauty. She was dressed plainly enough in a pink-striped cambric robe—fashionably made, however—a black silk jacket, fitting tightly to her form, and a black hat with drooping feather. This morning costume suited her no less well in its way than the flowing white at the concert. It would have been difficult to say on which occasion her loveliness showed to best advantage.

Marjory was in her favourite place beside the window, where Lina joined her. Mrs. Peele sat in the large arm-chair near the hearth, and chatted with Gerald. But continually, in the intervals between remarks upon the weather, the cathedral, the respective merits of the College Yard and Albion Square—which were all that he and Mrs. Peele could find to talk about—those large gray eyes of his, full of a strange, reverential light, were straying across the room to that face beneath the shady hat. Marjory observed it, and thought that he might be making a study of Lina's features. Lina did not so interpret those dreamy looks; but she felt an attraction which was new to

her. Adoration was her natural atmosphere, and she held it cheap; flirtation she abhorred. But those eyes gazing, gazing, at her now, were not like other eyes. She found Marjory a little tiresome. She would have liked to rise, and change places with her stepmother.

But this under-tone of inclination was in no degree discernible. She continued talking to her former schoolfellow, with the most affable composure, of old times, mutual acquaintances, and so forth. Meanwhile, Marjory also was not wholly absorbed in the words which she heard and uttered. She was trying to conquer a strange reserve, never felt before—to introduce a certain subject without embarrassment. She could not command her manner with Lina's ease; she could not help seeming absent and pre-occupied; till at length, *àpropos* to nothing, out she came with the thought in her mind.

"Lina, you remember my telling you about Mr. Hugh—Mr. Vivian I must call him now. He is here, living at Alton."

The sudden stiffness which she had observed at Rockswold, a year before, came again over Lina's countenance.

"I knew it. I knew that you would see

him sooner or later. I thought it better not to warn you beforehand."

"But why, Lina? Pray tell me." She lowered her voice, speaking more eagerly than she herself was aware. "Is he the Hugh Vivian whom you knew at Bullingham?"

"He is," replied Lina, in a cold, clear tone.

"You are quite sure we are speaking of the same person?"

"The militia quartermaster," answered Lina, with an infinitesimal touch of scorn: "I recognised him soon after our arrival at Albion Square; and a short time later I heard his history, and knew that he must be your old acquaintance."

"Mrs. Carberry told you his history?"

"She did. She is a kind person, but given to chatter."

"And, when you asked her to call on me, did you tell her that I had known him before?"

"No. Why should I? There was no occasion to mention his name."

"I am glad of that, because I said nothing. But, Lina——"

"Well?"

"You called him a black sheep."

"He was one, at Bullingham. He may not be so, particularly, now. I have heard nothing, since we came to Alton, against his moral character."

"Why do you say specially, 'his moral character?'"

"Because one point against him I have heard: that he sneers at all religion."

"Poor fellow," said Marjory, with an involuntary sigh. She sighed because she was thinking of the past, of Hugh's past; but Lina looked severe.

"You know, Marjory dear, I told you at school, that you were too latitudinarian. There are limits to tolerance; and compassion may become sentimentality."

"Oh, yes: but you did not know him in the old days. You are hard on him, Lina. I am forgetting, though,—you said that he had once done you a great injury," said Marjory, looking somewhat wistfully into Lina's beautiful eyes.

"I told you, at the same time, that I did not know—exactly—what the injury was; and I have no means of proving it. I cannot explain myself, but I must beg that you will mention this to no one at Alton. There are plenty of gossips, who might ferret out

things better forgotten. I should not wish anybody here to know that I have any special cause for resentment against Mr. Vivian."

She spoke with strange disturbance of her usual calm, and Marjory hastened to assure her that she need not fear her repeating anything forbidden by Lina.

"Only Mr. Vivian was in my mind when I questioned you. I did not wish to think him so very bad."

"I do not say that he is very bad," said Lina rigidly: "I have no concern with anything he may be at present. The past, as I said, is better forgotten. And now let us speak of this no more.—You have been to Thorne, you said. Did you find any changes?"

"You know nothing, then? Oh, I will tell you——"

"Lina!" said Mrs. Peele—"Is it not time for us to be going?"

"Yes, the children will expect us," said Lina: "I suppose, Marjory, you would hardly care to walk part of the way home with us?"

A blankness which had shadowed Gerald's face, passed like a cloud. He started up, exclaiming:

"Yes, Marjory! a capital idea. Get your hat, and I'll come too, to bring you back."

Unsuspecting Marjory departed, thinking Gerald very kind. When she returned, five minutes later, equipped for the walk, he and Lina stood together at the table, looking over her album of photographs.

"Who is that?" Lina was saying as she entered: "I know the face."

"I did not mean to leave that there," said Marjory. It was a loose photograph, which she had mechanically slipped between the pages of her album on the previous evening, when intent on Hugh Vivian's card:—the portrait of Jessie in her bridal dress, beautiful, happy, beaming.

"Please give that to me, Lina; I must put it away. It is poor Jessie. Bellhouse gave it to me last night."

"So the Jessie of your Thorne fairy tale is married! How unsuitably she is dressed! A pretty face, nothing particular in it. Whom did she marry?"

"A Mr. Russell," said Marjory shortly.

She had by no means decided how much or how little to tell Lina of Jessie's sad history. Bellhouse would hardly wish that it should spread further than was necessary.

But Lina was not of a curious disposition, and asked no troublesome questions. Her inquiry as to the husband's name answered, she said no more.

And now, as they set forth, Marjory found herself walking alone with Mrs. Peele, while Lina and Gerald went before. This seemed indeed to happen naturally, since the crowded pavement of Saturday prevented their remaining undivided. Marjory, behind, was pleased to see, from the manner in which her brother and her friend conversed, that Lina appreciated Gerald.

"I have not seen your pictures, after all, Mr. Stanhope. We were hurried to-day; but I must hope for it next time I come."

"My pictures," repeated Gerald, slightly colouring; "you are very good to dignify them by that name! I hope you will not expect true pictures, though, or the contrast will make them seem even poorer than they are."

"I do not think there is any chance of their seeming poor; I have heard all about them from Marjory."

"Marjory is partial, you know. I do hope, I confess, to attain to pictures some day;

at present my performances are only—what shall I call them?—efforts, perhaps."

"And what are the grandest pictures but efforts?" said Lina—"efforts towards perfection; some nearer to it than others, but none attaining it."

Gerald looked at her with all his soul in his eyes.

"The ideal!" he said, musingly: "Shall we ever reach it, I wonder? Here, I know we never can, but hereafter? And, if we do, what then? Will success satisfy us? or will another ideal, undreamt of before, rise like a mountain-peak beyond?"

"There is nothing, I think, to be gained by such speculations," said Lina, in her decided tone. "We have not capacities for them at present."

"Or, rather, our capacities are not unfolded at present; we have them, but they are asleep."

"You must take care that you do not get too dreamy," observed Lina. She felt a great interest in this young man, and wished to influence him for his good. "So much talent goes to seed, it seems to me, because talented people are so often unpractical, or waste their powers in abstractions. The

point is, not what we are to be and have, but what we are and have now; to be industrious, and make the best of our present powers."

"Only dreams minister to work," said Gerald: "They are inspirations sometimes."

"Dangerous ones," said Lina, sententiously.

"Does that follow? The best part of life, so far, is unseen; and no one can reach the highest type of art, whether in poetry, music, or painting, unless he realises the unseen as a fact, learns to live consciously in its presence. Because, you know, copying is by no means the whole of art. Faithful copying of outward detail is a great deal; it may be called the body; but the bringing out of the unseen is the soul. And so dreaming, as you call it, becomes part of an artist's practical work. When the dream in his own mind is complete, the picture is half done."

"As for me, Mr. Stanhope, I fear that my art sympathies are sadly defective. I am a great admirer of fine pictures, and of really good music; and that is all I can say. When you speak of the soul, and so forth, I do not follow you. Surely, to copy nature is in all art the principal aim."

"Yes; but what is nature? Something more comprehensive than one realises at first sight. Certainly no great effect can be gained without command of form and colour; but form and colour are servants, even then."

"You must show me your own pictures, and then, perhaps, I shall understand you better," replied Lina.

To Marjory she would have replied: "This is nonsense;" but she already esteemed Gerald too highly to suspect any nonsense in him.

"My own pictures! There it is again," said Gerald, smiling. "Talking is one thing, and practice is another. I have not myself even attained so far as correct drawing."

"You are very humble."

"No; only clear-sighted. I am all astray for want of a master."

"You will have one some day, no doubt. Patience and resolution work wonders."

Hackneyed words! embodying one of the maxims which formed the unbending rule of Lina's life; but, spoken by those beautiful lips, they were a bugle-note to Gerald.

"Thank you," he said; "I shall try to be patient and resolute. It will be easier if I can see you sometimes."

How simply and naturally was this sentence spoken!—so simply, that Lina did not at first take it in. But a moment later the rich colour deepened on her cheeks. She was accustomed to the compliments of young men; but this was not like a compliment. She felt, for once in her life, embarrassed, and unable to reply.

CHAPTER II.

"A cold and clear-cut face . . . .
Perfectly beautiful: let it be granted her: where is the fault?
* * * *
Faultily faultless, icily regular, splendidly null,
Dead perfection, no more; nothing more."—*Tennyson.*

It was a relief to turn from the bustle of the streets into the cool of Albion Square. The acacias and horse-chestnuts were so green, spreading, and shady; the central gardens looked bright, yet peaceful; the whole had an air of seclusion. A bird was singing, as birds sing in the country, in the heights of the boughs.

Somehow the atmosphere of the place appeared to Gerald an emblem of Lina's life—that calm, high life as he regarded it, apart, as it were, above the world. Only just round the corner roared the town, with its stir and traffic; this quiet square was close to it, and yet far removed. Just so were that serene

face and palm-like form among the throng of work-a-day men and women.

> "High amid starlike saints,
> Radiant and calm,
> Girded with golden crown,
> Bearing green palm."

These words were floating in his mind as he walked on in silence, casting a glance at Lina now and then,—seeing her always, whether he glanced or not. Presently they reached the gate of the white house, with the geraniums blazing on either side the door.

"You must come in and have some tea," said Mrs. Peele: "We always dine early, and drink tea at this time, on account of the children."

"Are you too busy, Gerald?" asked Marjory, hesitating. But Gerald did not even look at his watch; he only thanked Mrs. Peele, and they went in.

The interior of the house was the essence of neatness and propriety. At school, Lina had always been held up as a pattern of these virtues; and her careful hand was equally visible here. That excellent rule—"A place for everything, and everything in its place"—seemed scrupulously obeyed. The books

were all in the book-cases, excepting a few arranged, after the usual fashion, upon the round table in the drawing-room. No stray volume lay on a sofa or smaller table, as if thrown hurriedly down at a sudden call. It was plain that, if books were ever read in this household—and of this Marjory felt sure, for Lina was a person of high education—they were replaced in their respective niches immediately after use. The music was all in the music-stand; the needlework out of sight in box or basket; even the chairs and foot-stools had each its own spot. No one could have imagined that the house contained a number of children—boys in the majority.

The drawing-room upstairs had large windows, overlooking a lawn, with a few neat flower-beds and a garden-seat under a mulberry-tree. Beyond the green palisade was an extensive view over Heathcroft, with the river winding past the grand stand, and the villa-like houses rising among their shrubs on the opposite bank.

"How nice this is!" said Marjory, standing in one of the windows. "You can see all that goes on on Heathcroft."

"We see a great deal too much some-

times," said Lina. "It is most unpleasant during the races."

"I should have thought you were not near enough for any unpleasantness."

"We are near enough to hear the noise, and the cheering of loud, coarse voices; and the bare sight, however distant, of the booths and the low people is repugnant to me."

"She is too high and pure to bear even the knowledge of anything that is not so," thought Gerald. Marjory felt somewhat guilty as she privately acknowledged that, for her, such scenes would have an undoubted fascination, though not unmixed with pain.

Her thoughts were diverted by the children, who entered prepared for tea, their hair well brushed, their hands spotless—two girls of seven and eight, and three boys from nine to twelve. The youngest boy was a day-boarder with Mrs. Myers and Miss Pilkington; the others attended the cathedral school; and the little girls had also at Easter become pupils at a day-school in the square. Mrs. Peele would have preferred to educate her girls herself—at least, till they were beyond her powers; but Lina had overruled this fancy. "The discipline of school was excellent," she said; "and children found

their own level among others. So to school Lizzie and Bertha were sent, their mother meekly repressing the disappointment which would arise when she remembered that from their birth she had planned to keep them in her own hands to the age of fourteen. At present the holidays were not yet over; but Lina superintended an hour or two of holiday tasks each morning after breakfast.

These were the second Peele family. Of the first, Lina was considerably the youngest; the only son dead, as has been seen; the other daughters married. Mrs. Peele, gentle and timid, had always been the most admiring and submissive of wives. She was now equally admiring and submissive to Lina, who was in every way a striking likeness of her late husband, and his favourite child.

Tea was laid out in the neat dining-room below: a regular meal—with thick bread and butter for the two elder boys, and three basins of bread and milk for the others. The children did not like bread and milk; but Lina said that it was the proper fare for children; therefore it was daily prepared, and they were obliged to eat it. Mrs. Peele had lately taken the bold step of adding a small piece of bread and butter by way of reward,

when the basins had been duly emptied; but she always looked deprecatingly at Lina, in dispensing this indulgence, knowing that Lina regarded it with severity. Lina poured out the tea, and sat at the head of the table. She had not taken off her hat; as she was going afterwards, she told Marjory, to Evensong at Saint Philip's.

The children were all marvellously proper and well behaved. They were handsome children, with the clearly cut, regular features which characterized the Peeles. Only the youngest little girl resembled the mother, being plain, light-eyed, and under-sized; but Marjory liked her the best. The others, children though they were, had a cold and critical aspect, of which this little girl was devoid; and she was evidently her mother's pet. Her brothers and sisters all had high, narrow foreheads, and manners of perfect self-possession. This child had a square freckled forehead and a broad head, and was shy and awkward.

"Lina, may I go with you to the orphanage, and hear the children sing?" Marjory heard her murmur, under cover of conversation between Mrs. Peele and Gerald.

"Not to-night, dear. You must stay to

mend that dress. You neglected it before tea."

"Because, Lina . . . . I heard mamma say that she wished the lilies were not over in our garden, and I was thinking, and I remembered my sixpence, and I got Charley to take me to the nursery gardens, and I bought some lilies for mamma's vase, to surprise her; and, when I had arranged them in the vase, it was time to get ready for tea. I'll get up early, and do the dress before breakfast on Monday, Lina."

"No, dear, you know the rule: that, when you tear a thing, you mend it at once. You will stay at home and do it."

The little thing grew red, and shuffled, and winked to hide a tear, as she gulped down the unpalatable bread and milk. Marjory felt a keen sympathy with her; but Lina, behind the urn, was immovable.

Towards the end of the meal a single bell began to sound, somewhere in the direction of the town, with a shrill and steady clang; and, directly they left the table, Lina said that it was time to start for Saint Philip's. Somewhat to Marjory's surprise, Gerald proposed that they should accompany her. So they bade good-bye to Mrs. Peele, whom

Marjory caught soothing little Bertha by a whispered promise to read to her while she worked. The other girl, handsome Lizzie, walked beside Lina; the boys escaped to play.

"I am sorry that the boys do not care for the daily services," said Lina pensively: "On Wednesdays and Fridays I insist upon their attendance; but I do not like to force them too much."

"You cannot expect every one to be like yourself by nature," said Gerald, reverentially. Marjory stared at him; then felt irritated, she could not have told why, and said with some sharpness:

"They would be extraordinary boys, indeed, if they preferred St. Philip's to the open air in such weather."

"I do not wish to see them ordinary boys," said Lina, calmly.

There was but a sprinkling of worshippers, mostly women, in the church. The sexes were divided. Gerald sat a little to the rear of the places into which Lina, Marjory, and Lizzie went on the opposite side: choosing the best prospect of Lina's face, with its beatified expression of devotion. The service was short, but hearty. Marjory could not but feel that it had more of the fitting atmo-

sphere of worship than the clock-faced church had known in the old days. The ugliness, the commonplace aspect everywhere, was done away. The surpliced choir, reverent and attentive, appeared a fit emblem of the holy worshippers above, and of what those hearts should be that strive to worship here. Nothing ludicrous or wearisome marred any portion of church or service. If one could not assert that more of the essence of spirituality was here than had been in the past, here, at all events, was more appearance of it. Outward reverence was in perfection; the grandeur, the beauty, of religion were brought into prominent place. All things tended to realisation of the Divine Presence, of the fact that this was His Temple. That fact seemed forced upon all present, whether they entered feeling it, or no.

The outward display of devotion in which certain of the congregation indulged was, nevertheless, slightly surprising to Marjory; but she remembered that minds are cast in various moulds, and refrained from condemnation. Lina was most punctilious in these observances. She curtseyed at every Gloria, bent low in certain parts of the Creed, and frequently crossed herself.

Many eyes were bent on her as she passed from the church, seeming to light the whole place with her beauty. Among the rest, Marjory saw that one of the clergy, a young man in a cassock, stole a long look as he strode past her in the porch, bowing slightly as she caught his eye, but not stopping to speak. He went hastily on, after a string of children in red cloaks, who were crossing the street, headed by a sister.

"That is Mr. Throckmorton," said Lina; "I have a singing-class at the orphanage, so I must say good-bye. It will be their bedtime in half an hour."

"Good-bye," said Gerald. "Are you going to Mrs. Carberry's party?"

"I hope so. Then I shall meet you and Marjory? That will be very pleasant.—I must come and see your drawings next week, Mr. Stanhope. Good-bye, Marjory dear. Come, Lizzie!"

She took the child's hand, and, with a graceful bow and smile, went off towards the orphanage. The door closed behind her with a clang. Gerald, who had looked after her, turned at the sound, and a shadow settled on his face.

"What fellows those parsons are!" he

said; "They are like tame cats; no one interferes with anything they do."

"Was it poor Mr. Throckmorton who gave rise to that remark?" said Marjory, laughing: "Pray what has he done to deserve interference? I only saw him walk, most unoffendingly, into the orphanage!"

"That's just it," said Gerald, wrathfully: "Wherever they wish to go, they can: they have it all their own way. Now, that fellow,—he can meet Miss Peele as often as he likes; so long as it is at a school or an orphanage, no one will say a word."

"I thought he had such a nice face!" said Marjory—"so good and earnest."

"Yes. No doubt others think the same. It's just the face that women adore."

"That depends upon the woman!" said Marjory; "Lina is not the sort of girl to adore any man."

"There I am sure you are mistaken," cried Gerald, warmly: "She is the sort who would give up everything in the world for a man whom she really loved—die for him, if needs were."

"My dear Gerald! how can you know so much about her in this short time?"

"I see it in her face," said Gerald—"In

her eyes. She has one of those strong, devoted natures. Only she is so high and pure, she would not care for just any man. Such a nature looks out for something above this world—something like itself: rarer than it supposes. That is why fellows like that Throckmorton are so dangerous! It is his business to teach and preach, and hide his humanity as much as possible; and so he seems like a saint, which he isn't. A good fellow, no doubt,—but not that.—Why are you laughing, Marjory?"

"I am laughing at your lively imagination. Who would think, to hear you talk, that the very existence of this unfortunate Mr. Throckmorton was hardly known to you till to-day?"

"There are things one can see through at a glance. Not that I wish to undervalue him. No doubt he's an excellent fellow; only he is a man, not an angel."

"I know Lina better than you do," persisted Marjory; "and I have come to the conclusion that she is one of the most essentially unromantic people I ever knew; far too sensible to think him, or any other, an angel."

"Never mind," said Gerald.—"I must

look up your old letters, Marjory. You used to write me volumes about her, once."

"Yes; I used to think her perfect—too good for this world. But now, in spite of her beauty . . . Gerald, what is it that seems wanting in her face?"

"I see nothing wanting in it. Nothing at all. It is a wonderful face," he repeated, half to himself; "Almost divine. *She* is an angel, if you like!"

Marjory, half troubled, half perplexed, watched him as he walked by her side, with that poet's face of his, and the light in his gray eyes. She thought of Lina, and contrasted the two countenances. Hers was a perfectly cast mould, she thought; his was full of spirit—a spirit rapt, aspiring, struggling, not rightly understanding itself or the world—imprisoned, craving for outlet. The look in Shelley's eyes, in John Keats' eyes—of both there was something; and with it something wholly his own,—something that she remembered evermore, as Gerald's look, only Gerald's.

"I hope you won't be disappointed any more, my Gerald!" she thought; "You have had so much disappointment, all your life."

She changed the subject after this; and they spoke of Lina no more. When they reached the house, Gerald said:

"I must paint this evening, Marjory; I have been idle lately."

He went straight to the attic. Marjory also shut herself up, and worked at her story till bedtime.

CHAPTER III.

"O God! God!
How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable,
Seem to me all the uses of this world!
Fie on't! ah, fie! 'tis an unweeded garden."
Shakspeare.

The next day was Sunday; a summer Sunday, of sunshine, calmness, peace. The atmosphere was all vocal with the chiming of bells from the churches in the town. How populous that town must be! how the people came streaming, streaming, through the College Yard! The other churches, of which there were upwards of twenty, here and there, had each doubtless its own congregation; but all together must have been but a tenth part, Marjory thought, of the congregation in the cathedral. She and Gerald had gone early, warned by Miss Pilkington, and had been fortunate in finding a friendly verger, who placed them in a vacant stall. There she sat, and watched the people flock by, every variety of face, form, expression. The carved faces above seemed to look down

upon them compassionately. "We have gone through all," their calm eyes said. "We know what life is. We remember." Then the organ pealed forth through the midst, echoing from pillar to pillar; the voice of a human soul, who had long passed on higher, but had left in these harmonies, expression of what countless other souls would fain express also, if they could.

The stream of people had scarcely ceased when the long white-robed procession of choristers, lay-clerks, minor canons, canons, the dean, vergers with staves, the bishop, filed in from the chapter-house. After that Marjory tried to think of the people no more. She had scanned the faces with double attention in the thought that among them might appear one seldom absent, during the last few days, from her mind. But Hugh Vivian was not of that multitude.

In the evening, after the second service, the brother and sister went a quiet walk by the river-side, and sat down in a peaceful place in a green field beyond the town. Marjory had her "Christian Year;" Gerald also had a book; but he did not read. He sat with his chin on his hand, looking out over the water towards the Shelburn hills.

What was he thinking of? Margery wondered. He seemed lost in a dream of happiness and peace. The glow fell on his face; it was difficult to discern what of it was from the sunset, and what from his own musings. A village peal was ringing in the country, far away; a dragon-fly, among the reeds by the river, was humming of its new life. A hush was over all things. They sat on till the sunset was ended and the glow had melted into transparent green. It had been a time to remember and look back upon, thought Marjory, as she turned homeward.

A little shy, but happily expectant, on the following afternoon, she found herself, with Gerald, crossing the lawn of Mrs. Carberry's garden. The garden was large, with trees and bright flowers, and a magnificent croquet-ground; where, beneath a gaily striped awning, Mrs. Carberry was seen presiding over tea and servants—smiling, bowing, and making herself agreeable. The Carberrys were rich, childless, and hospitable; Mrs. Carberry in particular was never, as she truly said, so happy as when surrounded by guests. She was always planning to bring friends together, to make prosperous matches, to prepare surprises for youths and maidens.

Kind to the heart's core, she seemed to live chiefly in the amusement of other people :— in their amusement; nothing much deeper. Perhaps she was not herself sufficiently deep for more.

"How do you do, Miss Stanhope? so glad to see you! And this is your brother. I am delighted to make your acquaintance. Now you must have some tea to refresh you after your walk: or perhaps Mr. Stanhope will prefer claret-cup? Please both sit down. You see I have collected a charming assembly of young friends. I am so glad we have a fine day! and, Mr. Stanhope, I owe you an obligation."

"Indeed?" said Gerald.

"Yes, indeed. I feel certain it is to you that I owe it. I have never been able to get Mr. Vivian here before; but now, having taken a fancy to you, he has actually promised to come. I expect him every moment. Seventeen times, Miss Stanhope, have I invited him since he settled in Alton! to eight dinner-parties, five garden-parties, and four picnics; and he refused them all. But now, the eighteenth time, he accepts! Yes, Mr. Stanhope, it is your doing! My dear Lina, here you are!—and dear Mrs. Peele! how

good of you to come!—and the dear boys too. Welcome all! Now what will you have—tea or claret-cup!"

Mrs. Carberry's attention was quickly diverted—Gerald's also, as he hastened to place a chair for Lina: neither thought again of Mr. Vivian. But Marjory sat abstracted, lost to the outer world. She heard indeed a hum of voices, a flutter of dresses, a clinking of cups and spoons; she saw a confused array of bright colours. But this was as a dream. The real part was a blithe young voice of the past, a light laugh, two dark eyes, a young soldier riding along a shady lane, with an air of careless grace.

"Mrs. Carberry has spoken to you three times, Marjory."

"I beg your pardon!" cried Marjory, with a start.

"What do you say to a game of croquet, my dear? Lina and your brother have just agreed to join four other young friends. Shall I find a partner for you in the same game? or shall we form another?"

"If I may, I would rather look on; I do not know the game," said Rockswold-bred Marjory.

"Not know croquet!" ejaculated Lina

and Gerald in one breath. Gerald added in his kind, brotherly way :

"Why, Marjory ! you never told me that. I'll soon teach you, if you will come."

"No, I should only be stupid ; and the rest would not like it," whispered Marjory, as she saw two thorough-paced croquet players impatiently awaiting the end of this discussion : one armed with a private mallet, vaguely formidable in her ignorant blue eyes.

"Well, my dear ! this is Liberty Hall. Do exactly as you like. Here is a comfortable seat, where you can see all that goes on ; and I will find a young friend for you directly," said good natured Mrs. Carberry.

A bevy of new arrivals fortunately averted the fulfilment of this promise ; and Marjory was left free to enjoy her favourite part of an unobserved spectator. The lawn was dotted with gay parties, the sun was shining, the flowers were sweet, every one seemed happy. The dark side of life was hidden to-day, and ignored. To the young like Marjory, it seemed as a bad dream, which after all one might easily escape. She was smiling to herself, when Mrs. Carberry suddenly tapped her on the shoulder.

"My dear! allow me to introduce Mr. Vivian."

She looked up into Hugh Vivian's face.

Her heart had begun to beat like some live creature; the blood rushed in a vivid flame to her face. She felt a choking in her throat, a longing to cry, as the little girl of old might have cried—"Mr. Hugh, I am so very sorry for you!"

But she was a little girl no longer, she was a grown-up young lady; and this was not Mr. Hugh, this was Mr. Vivian: a man, and not a youth—a man of the world, with a sarcastic, bitter face. Her self-command returned as suddenly as it had left her. She bowed smilingly in answer to Mr. Vivian's raised hat; and then, by a mutual involuntary movement, they shook hands. Good-natured Mrs. Carberry saw in this nothing peculiar. Her attention was greatly divided, her kind little eyes had strayed to another quarter of the ground, where she espied advancing arrivals.

"Miss Stanhope will no doubt introduce you to her brother. You came only to meet him, I know. Very unkind! but I forgive you. I bear no malice. Oh, there is sweet Mrs. Rookes! and that elegant Miss Maddox,—

and dear Mr. Pellock too—how truly kind! I must fly! Pray make yourself quite at home, Mr. Vivian."

She was gone; and Hugh Vivian sat down at some distance, on Marjory's bench.

"Why am I supposed to be so anxious to meet your brother?" he said, with a touch of a smile; "I shall be highly honoured, of course, by his acquaintance. But I came to meet you. I knew you, in one moment, at the concert."

"And I knew you—not in one moment, but soon."

"Did you? I thought I was changed beyond all knowledge. As for you, you are not changed at all. Your face carries me back—how many years?"

"Eight years this month," said Marjory.

"Eight! Eighteen hundred — eighteen thousand—an eternity, isn't it? Fancy your turning up again, and here! Do you know it was all I could do, the other night, to help going up to you and saying: 'Well, little Marjory!' Only you are not Marjory now; you are Miss Stanhope."

As he spoke, more and more of the Mr. Hugh of yore awoke in his face; a softened expression dawned upon it, the

bitterness gave way, as he looked into Marjory's blue eyes.

"I suppose you know about poor old Lady Thorne?" he said, after a long pause.

"Yes, I went to Thorne last week, and saw Bellhouse."

"She told you everything?"

"Yes."

A sob rose in Marjory's throat, and half choked her. She looked away, over the croquet-ground, afraid to meet the dark glance, once so sunny.

"Yes?—Well!—Was it somebody in the Bible who said: 'The Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me?'"

"It was Jacob. But he was comforted afterwards."

"Was he? A lucky fellow! Never mind. How do you come to be here?"

"At this croquet-party?"

"No, at Alton. I thought you lived somewhere two or three hundred miles away."

"Yes, but Gerald, my brother, got a clerkship in this bank, and I am keeping him company in his lodgings."

"Then you are going to stay?"

"I hope so. Till—if——"

"'Till—if—;' have you any special hope of living anywhere else?"

"Some day, perhaps, if I succeed in a plan. I mean, if Gerald can ever afford to give up the bank and go to London or Rome, I shall go with him."

"That is all you mean? Pray excuse my rudeness. I can't help remembering old days, when I might ask you anything I chose; and I thought, perhaps, when you said 'Till—if—' so modestly, that you might be——"

"What?" said Marjory, staring.

"Looking forward to something even better than life with Gerald."

"There could be nothing better to me, if he were only an artist. That is my dream still. It used to be, if you recollect, eight years ago."

"I recollect," said Hugh, perceiving that she had caught no glimpse of his meaning; eyes more fancy-free than those which met his own at this moment could not exist: "I thought of it when I saw you with him."

"How could you tell that he was Gerald?"

"I felt sure that he was your brother, from the likeness. Then I set to work

to ferret him out, hoping to find you. How do you like your lodgings?"

"Very much. I am to pay for my share in them, by teaching the little boys."

"Are you indeed? Is that necessary?"

"Quite, if I live with Gerald; and I want to live with him, and make him happy—if I can. Besides, I shall enjoy it. Why are you disgusted?"

"Oh, nothing; only you don't look as if you were made for a drudge."

"I shall not be a drudge; it is only for three hours. After twelve o'clock I shall have all my time to myself."

"And what have you been about, all these years?"

"I have been living at Rockswold," said Marjory.

"Far 'up country,' isn't it?"

"Yes, in —shire, eight miles from the nearest town. Everything here seems quite exciting after it."

"Ah, that is how you have kept the same face, I suppose! You have lived 'far from the madding crowd.' I suppose nothing ever happens at Rockswold? What did you do all day?"

"Endless things, I was never dull one

minute. I should be much more likely to grow dull here in the town, if it were not for Gerald, and my plan."

"I wonder what this wonderful plan may be! Something in 'Gerald's' behalf, of course."

"You would laugh at it," said Marjory: "You used not to look so scornful!"

The words slipped out unawares; she bit her lip, and blushed.

"No, that was my ignorance."

"I don't understand," said Marjory, repelled by his manner.

"My ignorance of this world, I mean; and the people and affairs of it. I took it all for a very different concern. But enough of that! I want to hear about you. So you have really gone on, ever since I saw you last, nowhere but at Rockswold?"

"Yes, I have never been even on a visit. I went to a day-school for eighteen months; but that was at Rockswold too. It was there I met Lina."

"I beg your pardon!"

"Lina Peele. You know her, I think?"

He looked across the croquet-ground to where Lina, calm and beautiful, stood, mallet in hand, awaiting her turn. As he looked,

he was cold and bitter again in a moment; the softened expression was gone.

"Miss Peele! Yes. I had once the misfortune to be under her father. He was manager of the Bullingham bank, and I a junior clerk. That was part of the style of thing, Miss Stanhope, which opened my eyes as to the world."

"Did he know your . . . . history?"

"Yes, that was my chief offence. An idle cross between a soldier and a country gengleman! nothing could be more objectionable. Your school-fellow, Miss Peele, who is his living picture, would say the same."

"She seems to have adored her father. I thought, from her description, that he must have been a delightful man," said Marjory, hesitating between sympathy with Hugh, and a certain vague doubt of him, inspired by Lina's innuendoes.

"The Peeles all thought each other perfect. That was the family characteristic. He could be delightful, perhaps, on occasion—to certain people. He was a rigid kind of a man, formed on rules, with a handsome face, carved into faultless lines, like his character. If I am not uncommonly mistaken, Miss Peele is just such another."

"But don't you admire her? she is so lovely!" said Marjory, gazing meditatively at Lina, with the sting of conscience which troubled her when she feared to be disloyal to her friend.

"I acknowledge that she is lovely; and I should perhaps admire her as much as, I suppose, she deserves, if it were not that, when I look at her, I see Mr. Peele; and that is enough for me."

"You seem to have disliked him very much!"

"I simply hated the fellow. And I had cause to hate him."

His face looked dark and hard, like that of some fallen spirit. Marjory remembered that fierce passion which had filled her with such horror at Thorne; which had given rise to the little prayer offered nightly since that time. Would that prayer ever be answered, she wondered?

More of that pitying wonder than she knew, was discernible in her eyes. He saw it, and again the hardness softened, as he looked upon that face which seemed a ray from a by-gone paradise.

"You think me very horrible," he said, with a melancholy smile; "I fear I am hardly fit to talk to you."

"I don't think you horrible at all," said Marjory, colouring; "Only I am sorry that you dislike the Peeles. Lina and I were such great friends at school."

"I remember what a child you were for beauty! You thought her an angel because she had perfect features; that was all."

"Not all, I hope. She is very good and clever, much better in every way than I am. I could not help looking up to her."

"She is a saint, no doubt. But you know there is a certain coldness in saints; and the Peele saintliness is peculiarly icy. As to her father, he was made of ice! I can't imagine how he got through so many summers."

"And Lina's brother—Richard—what was he like?"

Why did Marjory ask this question? She did not know if she were right to ask it; for therewith came the recollection of that mysterious wrong, connected, Lina had said, with her brother. Was it a breach of friendship thus to seek information concerning him, from the person by whom that wrong had been done?

"Richard," he repeated: "Well, he was a splendid-looking fellow —the handsomest of the lot; and that is saying a good deal.

In his own family he passed as a paragon to the last. His father believed in him almost as implicitly as in himself: that is saying a good deal, too!"

"And Lina was devoted to him, though she mentions him so seldom. Did you know him well?"

"I saw a good bit of him; he used to be in and out of the bank. Yes, and I knew a good bit about him too. His father and sister would have been slightly astonished at one or two things I could have told them."

"But was he not what they thought him?"

"As to that, if he were half they thought him, he must have been more than man. I ought to be, and am, the last in the world to blame a fellow for having a little more human nature in him than marble statues find necessary! But hypocrisy is another thing."

"Are you sure he was a hypocrite? Poor Lina! You are mistaken, I hope," said Marjory, reproachfully.

"Never mind—I don't want to condemn him, I'm sure; he is dead, and there is an end of it. I was never more surprised than when I found his name below Mr. Peele's, in the Bullingham cemetery!"

"Was that the first you knew of his death?"

"Yes," said Hugh: "I had been away—out of England—nearly two years. I went back, on my way here, for an hour, to Bullingham, to see my mother's grave."

He paused. Marjory, glancing at him, was struck with the world-weary look which she had observed at the concert. Dark memories seemed to flock about him. He seemed tired, not in body but in soul.

"Life is a mystery," she said dreamily.

"It is indeed. And a cruelty."

"Oh, don't say that!" cried the girl, with a pain in her heart.

"To some, I meant. Not to all, perhaps. I hope it will not be so to you," he added, softening, with his old kindness, as he met her troubled eyes.

"It is a mystery only:—indeed—I feel sure," said Marjory, as if pleading: "If people had only patience—just to wait and see——"

"Pardon me, have you ever gone through a great trouble?"

"I was often very unhappy, as a child, when my uncle and aunt were so poor. As to a great trouble—I don't know."

"That is quite sufficient. Wait till you do know, and answer me then."

"But that poor old woman at Thorne—Bellhouse—she has gone through awful troubles,—I don't know how I could have borne half!—and she does not think life cruel."

"Unfortunately, we are not all old women."

"You consider faith an old-womanish quality, then?"

"I don't go into abstractions. I am thinking of facts. You remember my mother?"

"Yes," said Marjory, under her breath.

"Can you fancy what it must have been to see her shut up in two close little rooms, in a provincial town, suffering every hour for want of things which had been daily bread to her all her life, and dying by inches because I had no money to get proper medical help—help which might have saved her! Dying by inches, painfully, all through a long, hot summer and autumn. Can you fancy it?"

He went on as if half to himself.

"The sky deaf, blind, dumb, all the while,—no pity in Heaven or Earth: and she in tortures,—until at last I was almost glad to

see her die. After that, I think it is small wonder if I can't say much about faith!"

A long pause followed: Marjory sat deep in thought. Meanwhile the blue sky beamed, like one great smile, on the sunlit garden; clear young voices, merry laughter, rang across the velvet lawn; happy faces glowed; flowers bloomed; gnats danced in magic measures in the balmy air; a lark soared upward into the ether, singing as if mad with joy.

"Is it all a mockery?" cried Marjory, of a sudden. "No! I will not believe it. Mr. Vivian, I could say what I think—only I will not, because you tell me I have suffered too little to have any right. I wish I too could go through some great sorrow—as great as yours—if that would teach me to convince you!"

"Don't wish that!" he exclaimed, earnestly. "You don't know what you say. Why should you take my words to heart so? I am nothing to you."

"You and Jessie!" she said, hardly hearing, and going on with her thoughts. "You two whom I saw together on my first view of Thorne! You both seemed so happy that day, so light-hearted. And now she is gone—no one knows where; and you——!"

"When did you see Jessie and me together?" inquired Hugh.

"In the lane by the plantations. You were riding, and Jessie was getting burdocks."

She blushed crimson, suddenly remembering Jessie's request and her own promise.

"Surely poor Jessie must be dead!" she went on abruptly, "or she would have written to her mother."

"I don't see that that follows," said Hugh. Marjory glanced up quickly, surprised at his tone. He, too, had coloured; a hot flush had mounted to the roots of his hair.

"You seem to have an unlimited belief in goodness, divine and human! In my opinion Jessie would write or keep silence as suited her own purposes. She was not overburdened with heart."

"Were you at Bullingham when she disappeared?"

"No, I was gone."

"You saw her sometimes, I suppose, as you knew the Bulkleys. Had she seemed unhappy or unsettled? When did you see her last?" asked Marjory, running on with her eager questions.

He frowned, as at some bitter recollection,

and observed gloomily: "You seem very much interested in Jessie."

"I can't help it; and her disappearance was so strange! Yes, she must be dead: but why did not her husband write?"

"Don't talk of her; you remind me of painful things," said Hugh: "I wish I could lose my memory!"

As he spoke, one of the games of croquet had come to an end; the players dispersed; some of them, laughing and chaffing, advanced over the turf. Mr. Vivian muttered to Marjory some hasty excuse, and walked off in an opposite direction.

CHAPTER IV.

"In the years I've changed,
Far and wide my steps have ranged,
And many sins and errors have been on me avenged."
Alexander Smith.

The croquet was over; it had grown dusk; the greater number of the guests were gone: but hospitable Mrs. Carberry had laid hands on a few, and carried them in to hear her new piano. She did not play herself, she said; but her young friends played. It was a rich treat to hear them. Dear Lina must give her opinion of the instrument, and sing to it one of her lovely songs. Twilight was music's hour! the lamps need not be lighted; dear Lina required no notes. So they sat, sprinkled here and there about the drawing-room, the low windows opened widely, admitting balmy fragrance. All were silent, while Lina's beautiful fingers explored the tones of the new piano. Hugh Vivian had entered among the rest, and sat alone in deepest shadow.

A tiny ante-room adjoined the drawing-room; the window of this also was open;

and here Marjory's favourite star was visible, brightening the twilight sky. Marjory, from her station near the door, looked at this window with longing; at length, unnoticed, she rose, and slipped away to a low chair beneath it. The music came softened from the further room; it seemed to come from the sky—from that star, thought Marjory.

"Now, Lina, my love, treat us to that charming little song which I admired so much the other day," said Mrs. Carberry.

Lina struck a few light chords, and obeyed. The simple words, set to a sweet and plaintive air, rang out in her clear voice through the stillness.

"When the balmy breath of Spring
Wakens nature into gladness,
When a thousand voices sing,
Even mine forgets its sadness;
When the shady paths I tread,
Where the pine-trees wave o'erhead—
O forest green and fair,
O pine-trees waving high!
How sweet your cool retreat, how full of rest!
Here, free from care and pain,
Gay as a child again,
Peace and contentment reign within my breast

"Oh, how sweet in forest glade,
When the mid-day sun is shining,
Underneath the leafy shade,
On a bank of moss reclining,
Lulled by many a murmuring stream,
Through the long bright hours to dream!—
O forest green and fair!
O pine-trees waving high!
How sweet your cool retreat, how full of rest!
Here, free from care and pain,
Gay as a child again,
Peace and contentment reign within my breast!"

"O forest green and fair! O pine-trees waving high!" Was it a cry from some spirit imprisoned among close streets and high walls, and pining for places far away, in the country that it loved? Marjory's eyes wandered from the calm star to the shadowy room which she had left. Sitting alone, like herself, half hidden by the folds of a curtain, she saw Hugh Vivian. His head was thrown a little back; his hands were clasped behind it: he was looking far into the past, Marjory felt certain. She knew how, in the semi-darkness, his eyes were burning like fires in gloom. She saw the vision upon which they rested:—a dingy room in a dingy street, the air close and full of din; and her, that beautiful, proud lady, her majestic face flushed

and contracted by pain—lying on a hard sofa, among ugly surroundings, and thinking of Copelands, her home.

"O forests! O pine-woods!" rang the cry; "O world of suffering! O multitude of aching hearts!" Tears, unnoticed by herself, stole down Marjory's face, as she looked, and thought, and listened.

Suddenly Hugh Vivian was beside her. He sat down on a chair opposite her own, resting his elbow on the window-sill.

"What are you thinking about?" said he. "You are just like your old self!—creeping away alone, and looking on from the background."

"You startled me," said Marjory: "I saw you in the drawing-room just now!—I can hear the music better here. And see!"—she pointed to the star.

"I know that star well," he said, gazing at it with a strange forlornness of expression. "It was shining, just as it is now, on the night when my mother died. She noticed it—told me to look. Where is she now, I wonder?"

"Somewhere far up beyond it," said Marjory, softly.

"You have still that old innocent belief, I

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see. Well! I wouldn't disturb it for the world; it must be so delightful.

"'There is beyond the sky
A 'Eaven of joy and love.'

How poor old Lady Thorne's school-children used to drone that out!"

"It is true; I believe it more firmly than ever," said Marjory's earnest voice.

"I wish it were within the range of balloons," said Hugh. "Behold Miss Peele! Depend on it, she is advancing to rescue you before your mind is finally corrupted."

Lina had indeed risen, her song ended, decidedly declining further performance; and, while Mrs. Carberry persuaded another dear young friend to replace her, she, tall and graceful, and with a purpose, made her way to the ante-room.

"Let me offer you a chair," said Hugh.

"No, thank you—I will sit here," said Lina, coldly, stationing herself upon an ottoman close to Marjory. "How pleasant it is, Marjory, here!—cooler than in the drawing-room."

"I wish it were light enough to look at the books," said Marjory: "Here is a table quite covered by them."

"You don't lose much by not examining those," said Lina; "Mrs. Carberry is not very discerning in her choice. She buys every book that she hears talked of—nice, or not nice."

"Might we be honoured by a definition of the word 'nice?'" said Hugh.

"You and I would hardly agree respecting it," remarked Lina, with the same cold distance; "Miss Stanhope—to whom I was speaking—knows what I mean."

"Do you, Miss Stanhope? Pray explain it to me then," said Hugh. "What do you call 'a nice book?'"

"A nice book!" repeated Marjory, a little nervous, as she observed Lina's manner; "I think a new definition of that word should be given in the next edition of Johnson's Dictionary. I myself should call a book nice, if it were interesting, pleasant; in fact, if I liked it. That is how the word is used nowadays."

"I mean not merely that," said Lina; "I could not call a book nice if it were irreligious, or in any way improper."

"Oh, of course not!" exclaimed Marjory. "But does Mrs. Carberry buy such books as those?"

Hugh all the while sat listening, his lip slightly curling in a smile.

"That paper on the table now—" pursued Lina, with a gesture of her finger, her head a little higher than usual—"'The Lynx.' If I were Mrs. Carberry, I should be quite afraid to leave it lying here."

"You would dread the effect on your housemaid?" inquired Hugh.

"Fortunately, it is beyond a housemaid's comprehension. I say all this for your sake, Marjory, because I know that your appetite for reading is omnivorous; and it does not do to rely implicitly upon Mrs. Carberry. She would offer to lend you any number of books or papers if she heard you express the least desire for them: and therefore I think it well to warn you."

"And pray may I ask how the 'Lynx' incurs peculiar condemnation?" said Hugh.

"I really do not care to discuss the point," said Lina, frigidly; "Marjory, if you doubt my judgment, glance over—do not read—its last article on 'Modern Fiction;' and you will see what I mean."

"Do just have the goodness to mention what special points you disapprove in that article," said Hugh, with some eagerness.

"Yes, do," said Marjory. "I won't read it, if it is bad. I would rather hear your report."

"And, then, there is so much less trouble in forming one's opinions at second-hand," observed Hugh.

"Since you ask it, Marjory, I will explain myself a little more clearly," said Lina. "The articles are undoubtedly very able, though caustic and unpleasant in tone. They profess to take a bird's-eye view of the range of popular fiction, dividing modern novels into classes, and picking them to pieces at the rate of a class a week. This week it is 'The Goody Class;' the name alone is significant! but what I myself think peculiarly shocking, is an attack on the doctrine of a special Providence, which the critic remarks to be 'the leading idea,' urged with absurd familiarity, in the religious novel. After quoting various passages illustrative of his assertion, and giving each a ludicrous turn, he goes on to a general discussion of the principle: and anything more irreligious I never read."

"Perhaps he is an atheist," said Marjory.

"An atheist without doubt; and worse."

"What do you consider to be worse than an atheist, Miss Peele?" said Hugh.

"One who is not satisfied with his own unsettled opinions, but does his best to unsettle those of others," said Lina, severely; "I imagine the critic in question to be a bad man, who has brought upon himself various misfortunes, and lays them to the charge of his Maker."

"Before you imagine anything further," said Hugh, "I had better tell you that I am the man."

"You!" exclaimed Marjory, aghast.

Lina showed no surprise; she simply appeared to petrify, saying nothing.

"Depend upon it," said Hugh, warming in proportion,—not with a pleasant warmth; he looked another person from the Mr. Hugh who had talked of old days to Marjory;—"depend upon it, people who have courage to speak out their minds on these subjects merely echo the minds of myriads who are too cowardly to speak, and so smoulder away in silence."

"To put it plainly, then, you think that the majority of professing Christians disbelieve in a Providence," said Lina, with slow distinctness.

She would have disdained, but for Marjory, to answer him; but Marjory's principles must be protected.

"As to comfortable Christians of no particular fibre, and little to try it if they had, I don't pretend to say. But for the multitude of poor wretches who knock about in the world, keeping their heads above water as best they can, I do think—and I not only think, I am certain—that the majority of those, whatever stock of ready-made beliefs they may start with, soon find by stern experience that Providence helps them just as much, and as little, as they help themselves."

"Cela va sans dire," said Lina, sententiously; "That is a proverb, you know."

"Exactly. A very soothing proverb for those who start fair, with plenty of health and strength, a capital, and perhaps helping hands—'interest,' as people call it. Such fortunate beings have only to be industrious, keep their eyes well open, and off they go! The lookers-on clap, and cry, 'Tally-ho!' They are pointed out as examples; probably it is all set down to a habit of rising at five, A.M., or of supping on oatmeal porridge; such practices are supposed to be specially blessed by superior powers. Altogether, they prosper, grow sleeker every year, and go at last, like 'the blessed gentleman in the

white waistcoat,' in oak coffins, with silver handles, to Heaven. Happy fellows! they believe in Providence, no doubt."

"I think you hardly know what you are talking of, Mr. Vivian," said Lina.

Marjory said nothing; she was absorbed in listening, in watching Hugh's face through the twilight.

"Just let us look at the other side; there is a different kind of start: the multitude who set out with no money."

"That is their parents' fault. Poor people have no business to marry."

"Human nature is stronger, I fear, than poverty. Never mind whose fault it is,—there is the fact:—multitudes turned upon the world, without money, perhaps without health, without much education, without big friends to give them a push or a pull,—in short, without anything in particular—except mouths which must eat, hearts which must beat, bodies which must suffer, and brains which must form their own conclusions. Multitudes of them. You ignore them, perhaps, but I tell you that they are here, all round you," said Hugh, fiercely; "Some of them sink, no doubt, at an early stage, into nonentities, or beasts of the earth; but

millions are of a different stamp,—they struggle and strive, on and up, do the best they can; but what they can, is not what they would; and they make no way. Circumstances sweep them off into hospitals,—into workhouses, into the slums of great towns, into niggardly homes. There they die out, like sparks which flickered, and so ended, for lack of fuel. If they had a little money, or a little more strength of body, or a special talent for some useful art, Providence might interfere. Having nothing of this, they have no Providence:—can you blame them, if they question its existence? Only, as I said just now, very few dare to own such questioning."

"I can express no opinion about unbelievers," said Lina; "They, and their tenets, are not desirable subjects of thought. I do not think it at all right that Miss Stanhope, who is young and inexperienced, should hear such conversation."

"Then Miss Stanhope had better cut me from henceforth," said Hugh, starting up; "I am not at all ashamed of my colours. I am an unbeliever. I do not see how any one in my circumstances can be otherwise. Unbelief must at least be less demoralising than

submission to such a Power as that which you call Providence."

Had an evil spirit entered into him, to utter its blasphemies? Marjory trembled. She felt an impulse to rise, and fly from the presence of this man, who was Mr. Hugh no longer. The same feeling, not as an impulse, but a principle, had moved Lina. She rose in silence, with quiet grace, gave one look, as summoning Marjory to follow, and walked majestically from the room. In the doorway she turned, expecting Marjory; but Marjory had never stirred. She remained in her place, her head showing like a shadowy carving against the opal background of sky: alone with Mr. Vivian.

For one second she had been on the point of following Lina; but suddenly, like a flame, a passion of pity arose within her. She forgot herself, what she was, where she was; and thought only of him, of the fiery furnace into which his soul had been cast. What wonder if the devils had taken advantage, to blind his eyes, and whisper in his ears?—Long ago she had caught a glimpse of a dark side in his nature; now it had been quickened, by misery, to an unnatural life. But the better side, which had so charmed her,

was not dead. She thought of her prayer, and took courage.

"Miss Peele is gone. Why don't you go?" he said, turning suddenly upon Marjory. He was angry; there was wickedness in his eyes. She would have shrunk away; but that pity held her back.

"Why should I go?" she asked, speaking half unconsciously; it seemed less she, than that pitying spirit, who spoke.—"It is only because you don't understand.—Oh, how I will pray that God may make you understand!"

She paused and checked herself, afraid of a sneer; but no, he only looked at her; and his expression softened. Gradually the evil spirit seemed to fade into some inner gloom. He did not speak; but suddenly he turned to the window, and, resting his head upon his arm on the opened sash, looked out again towards the star. Marjory could not see his face; she sat motionless and silent. Thus full five minutes went by.

"I must go," he said, turning abruptly back, and holding out his hand: "Good-night.—Thank you."

The next moment he was in the drawing-room, shaking hands with Mrs. Carberry, and then he was gone.

CHAPTER V.

"I pray, sir, tell me, is it possible
That love should of a sudden take such hold?"
Shakspeare.

The Peeles had risen; Gerald rose likewise, and looked about for his sister.

"Come, Marjory! We shall have a pleasant walk. Do you see how bright the moon is?"

"Marjory," said Lina, at her elbow, "I wish to speak to you alone. Ask your brother to walk in front with mamma."

Gerald looked suddenly blank, but acquiesced; offering his arm to Mrs. Peele. Mrs. Carberry made voluble adieux, full of hopes for future meetings; and the party set forth, Marjory growing nervous as she entered upon her *tête-à-tête* with Lina. Gerald, attentive to Lina's least wish, remained resolutely in front, doing his best to maintain conversation with Mrs. Peele. The boys were still further in advance, and thus they all passed through the iron gates of Mr. Car-

berry's domain, and under the shrub-bordered wall, towards the town.

"I am anxious to give you a hint, Marjory," said Lina, in a low voice: "You must not be offended. At Rockswold, as you know, you saw little of the etiquettes of society."

"Well!" said Marjory, not over-graciously.

"I went into the ante-room, much as I dislike that Mr. Vivian, for your sake. You see, Marjory, dear, it would pain me no less than yourself, if—through ignorance, mind, I know quite well, only through ignorance—you should be talked about."

"I don't understand you one bit."

"Your understanding will enlarge, when you have lived here a little longer; at present I suppose I must speak plainly. Do you know, dear, it is not at all the thing for a young lady to sit alone with a gentleman in a room separate from others?"

"Why, everybody saw us! we were close to the drawing-room," cried Marjory, crimson. "Besides, he came; I could not help it."

"I know; but, when he came, it would have been better if you had gone. 'A word to the wise is sufficient.' You will remember another time."

"I don't know that I shall," said Marjory; "I can't bear the thought of such nonsense between Mr. Vivian and me! Lina, I wish you had not put it into my head! It is only that I can't forget old times, or his kindness when I was a lonely little child. I should hate to forget it! and if it does him good, after his troubles, to talk to me about past days, how can I repulse him? It would be quite wicked, when neither of us means any harm,—just for stupid etiquette!"

"Etiquette is very necessary," said Lina: "and there is another point. He is no way a fit companion for you. I was simply astonished that you could remain in the room with him, after his talking in that shocking manner! I myself could not have stayed another moment."

"You never knew him in former years," cried Marjory, much excited. "If you had seen him as he was at Thorne, and at Copelands, his home, you could not help pitying him."

"It is sometimes a painful duty to set pity aside," said Lina calmly. "When pity and duty clash, no right-minded person should hesitate. We must be faithful; we must deliver our own souls; and then we are free."

"But suppose you care for the wicked person, and want to help him?" cried Marjory, on the verge of tears. "That is all very well if one thinks only of one's own soul, and of being 'faithful' in a rigid kind of way; but suppose one is longing to help him?" repeated Marjory, passionately.

"Ah, there is the danger!" said Lina, quite unruffled. "When we allow personal feelings to place themselves in competition with duty, we cannot tell where they may lead us. You make me afraid for you, Marjory," she added with composure. "Do read Abercrombie 'On the Moral Feelings,' and Locke 'On the Understanding,' once more. You know your failing, and how I have cautioned you on the importance of self-government."

"Yes, I know, but . . . . It is no use! I could not make you understand what is in my mind.—Why is it that you hate Mr. Vivian so?" asked Marjory, with sudden change of tone.

"Marjory!" said Lina, in mild reproof; "I hate no one; I merely have reasons for believing Mr. Vivian to be a bad man; and I fear lest you should suffer from his society."

"I wish you would tell me your reasons."

"I may, perhaps, some day. Meanwhile, I hope that you will take my advice, and have as little as possible to do with him. Now I have delivered my conscience; this unpleasant subject may close."

She was evidently comfortably assured of having performed a duty; and ere long she was chatting with her mother and Gerald, while Marjory walked in silence alongside, smothering a tempest in her heart. Marjory felt, with a strangely sudden intensity, that Lina and she could never again be real friends.

Between their natures a great gulf was fixed; she had partially suspected it before; now she saw it; there it was—full of ice and snow—yearning at their feet! She had not discovered it in the innocent school-days, because her mind had been dazzled by the light of Lina's statuesque beauty, streaming from its other side. Was Gerald dazzled now in the same way? thought Marjory, with a sudden pang.

She glanced at him; his cheek was flushed; his gray eyes shone with that new radiance, which she had noticed of late. He seemed to hang upon Lina's words — upon her

looks,—when she smiled, his whole face glowed.

"Oh, my Gerald!" thought Marjory, with a stab at her heart. The annoyance on her own score was forgotten; she was full, not of herself, but of those two—Hugh on one hand, Gerald on the other. But Hugh Vivian repelled no less than he attracted her, she thought; pity alone maintained her vivid interest in him! while Gerald—somehow her whole life seemed bound up in Gerald. As she looked at him, now, that new pang of anxiety sharp within her, she felt that she could cheerfully die for him.

They had soon reached the college-yard; but Gerald insisted upon escorting the Peeles to their square. Marjory went in alone. The lamp was lighted in the little sitting-room, and the table prepared for supper; but she would not sit down without Gerald; and she felt too restless to settle to books or work. The thought struck her that she would beguile the time by looking at his pictures; she lit a candle, and mounted to the attic.

The low window, still open, had no blind. She seemed almost on a level with the starlit sky, stretching away before her. Setting

down her candle, she knelt within the framework, and looked out, her elbows on the sill. Far below, by the river-side, a tall lamp was burning; a policeman was slowly pacing along the towing-path; the opposite bank lay like a shadow-land, still, mysterious. It seemed to her as if again that cry were ringing—

> "O forests green and fair!
> O pine-woods waving high!
> How sweet your cool retreat, how full of rest!"

Somehow, intermingled with those words, came thoughts of Gerald. If she should ever be compelled to see Gerald suffering, as Hugh had seen his mother, powerless to help, even relieve—what would it be to her? to her hope, to her faith? She shrank from the mere idea; and with that shrinking rose new pity for Hugh. What was she, she thought, to condemn him?—she who had never known what anguish meant! What if she yet should know?

She shrank again, and moved from the window. In doing so, her eyes fell upon Gerald's substitute for an easel. Upon it rested a picture; not the imperfect sketch of the "Bridge"—another, complete in colours.

Raising her candle, she recognised at once the painting which had been turned to the wall: that of the sculptor, gazing at the vision of his ideal, for which Gerald had vainly so long sought a face to satisfy his fancy.

Marjory looked in astonishment. The features were no longer a blank; the face was filled in. A brush, from which the paint had not been washed, lay on the boards supporting the easel. The light of the candle streamed full upon the upraised eyes, half wondering, half enchanted, of the sculptor; upon the shining robe and bright hair of the floating figure; upon the countenance, etherealised, beatified, which that bright hair crowned.

Beatified, yet familiar! A startled cry broke from Marjory. That face, so true, yet so untrue, in its pourtrayal, was the face of Lina.

CHAPTER VI.

"And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts."
Longfellow.

No knight of olden time, riding full tilt into the tournament, his lady's colours at his helm, felt his courage quickened by a brighter or more disinterested flame than that which fired Marjory's heart, when she began her commonplace work in Mrs. Myers' schoolroom. It was a hot August morning; and the sun, high betimes, shone through big bare windows upon boarded floors, long deal tables, wooden forms, a flock of little boys of all ages from six to eleven; upon Miss Pilkington, walking to and fro, with a magisterial air and full eyes; upon Mrs. Myers, gently striving to keep order, as she dealt out slates and copy-books from a cupboard. In upon this scene came Marjory, with blue eyes bright and shining, and a face all aglow with hope and purpose. The rampant little boys regarded her with pleasure, opining that she was young and "up to

larks," like themselves. Miss Pilkington, too, was pleased, and felt that she had every cause for satisfaction in her new assistant.

Yet all the while, deep in the girl's heart, beneath the upper radiance, rankled a sting: the remembrance of that face in Gerald's picture. She resolutely assured herself that she was a foolish girl, full of fancies—that Lina's face had without doubt a beauty worthy to be reverenced,—that admiration was one thing, love another—she herself admired much that she did not love. Why bring love at all into the question, she asked:—but then the sting rankled more sharply than before.

As days passed on, however, she saying nothing to Gerald, and he nothing to her, of the alteration in the painting—the poignancy of that discovery lost its power. She felt free of care again, and accused herself of making a mountain from a molehill. "It is my quiet Rockswold life," she thought, "which has made me morbid, and inclined to take everything *au grand sérieux*. I am glad I have come out of it, if only for a while, into the realities of active life. I have no time now for imaginations."

Her hours were indeed amply filled. She

and Gerald both rose early, and sometimes went out before breakfast; at other times Marjory read, sitting in her window, the river flowing beneath, the meadows, in their morning freshness, stretching beyond, the dew upon the grass. From nine to twelve she was busy in the school, soon becoming greatly interested in her pupils, studying their respective characters, and winning their hearts apace. In these few hours of teaching she had no sense of drudgery,—only of pleasurable occupation, which she soon learned to love for its own sake.

Then, from twelve to one, came a free hour, spent sometimes in music or reading, sometimes in the cathedral. She often went into the cathedral, and sat alone, looking up into the vastness, toward the immortal figures, motionless, yet full of inspiration. Sometimes the organist was practising; sometimes a young boy's voice, reciting an anthem solo, rang from behind the screen. Then life and all things in it became transfigured; and that transfiguration often lasted throughout the day, sometimes into the next day, and gave her new and wonderful ideas in her work for Gerald. That work, her book, was in these days the principal thought in her

mind: all else seemed subordinate to it. She was continually dreaming about it, seeing its people and its scenes, as living pictures, though visible to no other. Between the afternoon and evening, she generally contrived to get four hours for the mechanical part, the writing. At this time her mind was so full that she had only to sit down, and the sentences, bad or good, flowed quickly from her pen to the paper. She was young, and strong, and healthy, and felt as though she had a power of almost unlimited work. Gerald came home at one to their early dinner, which was over by 1.30, and as soon afterwards as was possible Marjory sat down to her desk.

In the evening, in the cool of the day, the brother and sister went long rambling walks together; sometimes into the country, sometimes about Heathcroft, sometimes through the streets, where human life teemed with never-failing interest for Marjory. Perhaps, when they came back, there was space for another hour of writing; perhaps it was already half-past nine, the hour of supper, the most cheerful meal of the day. After supper they would sit and talk—talks treasured in Marjory's memory; or they would read,

Gerald in the arm-chair, and Marjory on a stool at his feet; or, by mutual consent—for there were times when both were too full of ideas for aught else—Gerald would go to his attic, and paint, and Marjory would return to her writing.

Of outward society they had fully as much as they desired. Several ladies called upon Marjory, acquaintances of Lina or of Mrs. Carberry: kind people, who felt a benevolent interest, not unmixed with pity, for the two young workers alone in lodgings:—they did not know how little such pity was needed!—Lina had contrived to convey a strong impression of the gentility of her friends: although, she said, from peculiar circumstances, Miss Stanhope had chosen to help her brother by a little light teaching, while sharing his home. Thus the brother and sister were received favourably, and as equals, into the town society, which, as a rule, was naturally inclined to classify new-comers by a standard based upon possessions rather than personalities. In this instance, the rule was waived, in deference to Lina: who, though her Alton residence had been of no long standing, was already deemed an authority in social matters, an oracle of good-breeding—

intimacy with whom was an acknowledged criterion of caste. From her emanated a lustre which, without her, gentle little Mrs. Peele could not have possessed; but by this reflected radiance the whole family shone as luminaries in the town society—the town society as distinguished from the cathedral society, which disdained the town, associating, beyond its own pale, mainly with county magnates. Even Lina's empire could not penetrate to these sacred precincts.

Invitations came often to Gerald and Marjory through the bright days of summer and early autumn: to croquet parties—for in those times croquet was rampant — to picnics, to evening assemblies, concluded by a dance. Sometimes Marjory fancied that her brother was more anxious than he had need to be, than from his letters, and her first knowledge of him, she should anticipate, to accept these invitations. She herself regarded them as interruptions, both to his work, and her own: and often persuaded him to refuse one or another, and spend the time thus redeemed in painting or sketching, or in studies conducive to the same. But Gerald, as he said, "Well! I suppose you're right!" and turned from the tempting note,

sometimes checked in its birth a sigh which Marjory could not bear. Then on the next opportunity, without consulting him, she would write unqualified acceptance; and no one, when the time came, was happier in these social meetings than she! Her enjoyment was untinged by any alloy of worldliness or self-exaltation.

The change from her daily routine was novelty and pleasure: for the rest, she regarded herself, and Gerald also, as they had once agreed, as members of "the working classes"—whose special aim was at once above and below conventional ambitions; and she, for her own part, had, as she believed, no personal aim at all—living solely in and for Gerald, that Raphael of the future.

Sometimes at these parties she met Hugh Vivian, sometimes not. It was a little strange, she thought, when her whole life was centred so entirely in Gerald, that any one unconnected with him should have power to interest her as she felt that Hugh Vivian did. He had certainly a strange fascination for her! the fascination of those days at Thorne. It was on account of Thorne, she thought, that this fascination was so vivid. In the Alton society, such as it was, she

quickly became a favourite. Every one liked and welcomed her, and she, as a rule, liked every one. She had soon struck up a variety of friendly acquaintanceships, and not only among her own sex: she was an amusing companion, her smile was bright, and her blue eyes were greatly admired. The young men of Alton made much of her, and circled round her, wherever she went; and she enjoyed their society well enough—but not one of them excited in her anything at all resembling her feeling for Hugh. When she found him among the guests, or, as sometimes happened, he came in towards the end of the evening, she was at once in a new atmosphere: one which she could not have analysed, had she tried: and she did not try. She knew only that it had a strange enchantment.

She believed that she enjoyed it because it acted with inspiring influence on her story. Certainly it did so act;—on such occasions, she always went home full of what she called "the spirit:"—a magical state of double existence, in which the world of her fancy appeared at least as real as that of sense, its inhabitants living and moving before her mental eyes, like figures in a theatre. Church-bells

transported her to this state; music, sunset clouds, certain pictures and poems, had the same peculiar witchery; and she supposed it was because a corresponding halo transfigured her memories of Thorne, that the presence of one, in these so prominent a figure, brought with it a charm no less potent. It was a charm of exactly the same nature; half bright, half melancholy. Those eyes, once so full of lightness and of sunshine, had a strange power now to make her heart ache. That look of half sarcastic philosophy, stamped on the face by experiences fraught with anguish, kindled within her a yearning that was almost pain. She had a craving for a quiet talk with him: a craving always baffled, and, for this very reason, increasing more and more.

After that hour in Mrs. Carberry's anteroom, he had never touched upon subjects of importance beyond the moment. He seemed to enjoy chatting with Marjory, when they met, much as he had enjoyed it years before, when she was a child who amused him. She amused him still, apparently; he had a pleasure in drawing out her opinions, and rallying her upon them, with something of the old badinage: only, the old under-

current of gaiety had ceased its flow, and instead was continually evident a similar current of an opposite nature, tinging all his views of men and of things. Sometimes, unexpectedly, Marjory found him watching her from a distance, with an expression which she could not fathom; whether cynical, or compassionate, or both, she felt unable to decide.

He knew everybody in Alton, and was one of the very few townspeople invited more than once a year to dinner-parties, or "At Homes," in the College Green. In past years all the higher dignitaries there had been on intimate terms with his family; and the acquaintance was not forgotten, although maintained at some distance now, as befitted his altered circumstances. He himself, with his quick pride, made no attempt to lessen that distance. On the contrary, he appeared in these houses at intervals only just sufficient to avoid rudeness; and the same in the county—where, indeed, from his mother's haughtiness, his parents had never been great favourites, and where death or years had already severed the few real friendships they had formed.

So, by degrees, the mothers with marriage-

able daughters, who at first had guarded them, nervously watchful, from his approach, found in him no danger, and grew instead to regard him, while still under thirty, as a confirmed misogamist. In the town, where his history was universally known, and where many still remembered the grand, beautiful Mrs. Vivian, driving in state through the streets, once a week or so, with the air of a queen, his acquaintance was considered an honour; the more so, since it was difficult to obtain, and he was reported to have inherited his mother's "high way." Had he made himself more common, the prudent among the citizen-mothers would doubtless have dreaded the penniless quartermaster no less than did the mothers of county and college. As it was, his cold reserve encircled him with an atmosphere of interest, which caused him to be courted almost in proportion as such courting was by him ignored; and every lady felt a sense of having secured a prize, if by chance he said yes, instead of no, to her oft-repeated invitation. And, indeed, the distinguished air, relic of his high breeding, which had clung to him through every privation, singled him out at once among all other young men who, in his absence, shone

supreme ornaments of Alton society; and who, in other circumstances, might have regarded a militia quartermaster as beneath any notice beyond patronage.

But Lina cared nothing for the *éclat* which kindled the Alton mind. That was all of the world, worldly, she thought; and she was above the world. She disapproved of this man. Had she not, deep within her stately heart, special reasons for such disapproval—over and above that general reason, of his religious scepticism? To set society against him by innuendoes was beneath her; besides, she had no proof by which to convince the world. But Marjory, at least, should not be deceived by him. Thus continually, when alone with Marjory, Lina would throw out hints concerning that mysterious wrong of which Hugh Vivian had been guilty. At such times there was something in the steady gaze of Lina's beautiful eyes which made Marjory blush, and shrink into herself, she knew not why, and prevented her crying, as she longed to cry,

"Lina, speak out in plain words! and tell me all the truth."

Something, moreover, in that gaze excited the question: "What right have I, after all,

to trouble myself about him?" And so, day after day, she was silent, though, all the while, the consciousness of that secret which Lina knew, quickened unawares her interest in him, and made her think about him far more than otherwise might have been.

But this was all an under-current. Uppermost were thoughts of Gerald. She had made it her first business, when the boys returned, to search out the Lewis Harding of the caricatures; and had found him in a red-headed pickle of ten years old,—an advanced age in this juvenile community,—in spite of which he was the wooden spoon of her class. Marjory soon contrived to introduce him to Gerald, who first overwhelmed him with confusion by producing the caricatures, then struck a match, and burned them in his presence. Thereupon they became sworn friends; and Gerald discovered that Lewis's chief desire was to be artist to a fleet of discovery—should any such office exist; thus to combine the achievement of two modest aims— to visit all the countries in the world, and to beat Uncle Tom hollow in painting. The "Uncle Tom" thus mentioned proved, as Gerald had thought possible, to be Harding, the great artist, of world-wide

fame; a relationship of which Mrs. Myers and Miss Pilkington explained their ignorance by the fact of Lewis's having been only half a year in the school; while the name was so common, and the boy—as they opined—so stupid, that such a connection had never entered their minds.

The good ladies gladly sanctioned the friendship between Gerald and the pickle, when they found that his pleasure in Mr. Stanhope's society provided at once a threat and a persuasive, in regulating his conduct. Henceforth, the whilom reprobate was never so happy as when—at moderate intervals—he was allowed to accompany Gerald in a walk, or to creep up into the attic in an evening, to watch him paint, volunteering saucy criticisms, and answering questions about his uncle; for Gerald delighted in drawing forth tales of the great master's private idiosyncrasies. Mr. Harding was at present in Scotland, studying scenes from the hills; scenes which, in any other hands, would have been hackneyed, but from his would come forth in the glow of a beauty only then interpreted. His nephew hoped that, in returning home, he would make a divergence to Alton, where he had

long intended to complete a sketch from the western end of the cathedral. Lewis had even, in his most illegible scrawl, indited an epistle as follows :—

"Dear Uncle Tom, There is a most wonderfuly Cleaver fellow hear who can draw Anything you would Stair if you saw him he ought to be in the Akadamy and he wants awfully to see you so please come soon your affectionate Nephew."

Of this, however, Gerald knew nothing.

"If only he could see Gerald's drawings, he would devise some way to help him ; he would recognise the power in them, and wish to free it," said Marjory one day to Lina. This was a matter in which Lina sympathised. None of that repellent chill which checked the mention of Hugh Vivian, extended to Gerald. Indeed, Marjory's hopes respecting him were much strengthened by Lina's opinion ; for Lina was highly educated, had travelled, and had visited, with the eye of a connoisseur, many Continental picture-galleries. Her judgment, too, was known to be dispassionate, unaffected by partiality ; therefore Marjory's heart was stirred by joy and triumph when Lina, sitting in Gerald's attic,

pronounced his work to bear the undoubted stamp of power.

Lina had called alone one afternoon, when Gerald was at the bank; and Marjory had caught at the opportunity to ransack his pile. The picture of the "Ideal" had been removed from the easel; and the "Bridge," now nearly finished, was restored to its place. Otherwise Marjory would never have taken Lina upstairs! Somehow she would not for the world have Lina know of that portrait. Even now the former pang shot through her in remembering that Gerald had taken it, as she had privately discovered, to his own room; where, although by day it remained hidden from profane curiosity, she felt sure that at night, and in the early morning, he sought from it inspiration for his work.

Before the easel Lina paused. Gerald had been busy of late in perfecting the figures. "The young hearts, hot and restless; the old, subdued and slow"—both were here magically true. Into this quiet attic, so high above the bustle of the world, a portion of that world seemed to have come,—to be there living and moving. What depths of fire burned in that young man's eyes, unconsciously so like Gerald's own! How weary,

disappointed, yet patient, was the gait of that toil-worn figure behind him! How ardent, yet half fearful in their ardour, were those young lovers, pressing on hand in hand! How divine seemed the inspiration of that poet, who had paused as if to listen! How careless was the glance of that bright-eyed child, throwing petals from its nosegay into the water, and watching them float away! How the tide flowed—how the water foamed! One could almost hear it dash against the buttresses! Surely this was not a picture; it was a page of real life, caught and fixed. Its power seemed to move Lina as she gazed. Marjory had never before seen in her such enthusiasm.

"Marjory, this is more than mere cleverness. Your brother will be famous some day."

"And yet he is not satisfied even with this," cried Marjory; "He says the drawing is not correct."

"He is right not to be satisfied; the true artist's motto is always 'Excelsior,' you know. And perhaps he is right about the drawing. Yes, I could point out defects."

Marjory's face clouded.

"That arm is too long; and the turn of

that foot is scarcely natural: then the colour is not smooth enough, and the shading is too decided; but these are minor points. If he could have a little practice under a good master, such faults would soon be gone. The spirit that breathes through all has the stamp of greatness."

And now that changeful face of Marjory's was all aglow once more.

"Thank you, dear Lina—thank you; you make me so happy! Now, sit down, and I will show you others. Some of these little sketches, when he was a boy,—I think they are really wonderful."

So Lina sat down, and Marjory knelt on the floor, picking out the choicest treasures of the large heap. Here a face, a mere outline, but still a true human face, stamped with the expression of the moment; here a group of rustic figures, each in itself a study; here a bit of moorland landscape, with a gray old stone, on which a sunset ray was slanting; here a fishing-boat sailing out at twilight upon a lonely sea; here a scene from some novelist or poet. Lina did not grow tired, although the stock seemed endless, and Marjory was continually saying, "Just one more!"

CHAPTER VII.

"And whether, so you're just and fair,
Other folks are so, you don't care;
You who profess more love than others
For your poor sinful human brothers."
Arthur H. Clough.

Steps below, and Gerald's voice calling "Marjory!" announced his return from the bank. She jumped up, scattering her drawings, and ran, intending to summon him to the attic; but an instant later she came back, crestfallen.

"How tiresome! he has brought some one with him. Lina, we must go down."

"Never mind, I have seen a good deal: and, Marjory, I must just say one thing."

Marjory paused in collecting the scattered drawings, and looked up into Lina's face.

"Keep up your heart; don't lose courage; persevere in trying your utmost to free your brother from that unfortunate debt. From all I have seen to-day, I feel a conviction that there is more in him than even you are aware."

Marjory could only exclaim, "Oh, Lina!"

between laughing and crying. Then, the drawings restored to their box, the two girls went silently downstairs, each absorbed in her own thoughts. Lina walked first. Marjory, behind, wondered, as they reached the sitting-room, to see her face suddenly change and grow rigid. The mystery was speedily solved. It was Hugh Vivian who had entered with Gerald.

"I met your brother at the door," said he, as he shook hands with Marjory: "I have never before succeeded in finding him at home; and even now it was a near-run thing!"

Marjory scarcely answered. She felt herself a coward; yet how could she be otherwise beneath that gaze of calm and penetrating severity? Here was altogether a different person from the Lina of five minutes past. Marjory had loved her then, had felt for her something of the old enthusiasm. Now she almost disliked her; the chill of that unfathomable gulf struck her once more.

"Gerald, we have been looking at your drawings," she said nervously, turning from Hugh to her brother. Gerald did not reply; he was absorbed in Lina, placing a chair for her, begging her to sit down.

"I have been working hard all day," Marjory heard him say. "Do stay and give me some refreshment."

He looked, indeed, tired and harassed, and Lina seemed to soften. Perhaps she was contrasting all she had just seen, with those many hours of uncongenial toil! She sat down; and Gerald sat near her, leaving his visitor to Marjory's sole charge. Marjory was not sure that he had not altogether forgotten that any one beside himself and Lina was present.

"What a nice room you have here!" said Hugh Vivian: "Certainly there are lodgings and lodgings. This is rather a contrast to my den in the High Street; it looks like home."

"It is home," said Marjory, involuntarily —"Wherever Gerald was would be home to me."

"I wonder how many such devoted sisters there are in the world! I should think they might easily be counted. If I had had a sister, now, I feel convinced that she would have married long ago; or, if not, she would be sighing to be married—watching daily, like Mariana, for some one to come and deliver her from my moated grange."

"I am sorry you have so bad an opinion of sisters in general."

"Bad! Not at all. It's human nature, isn't it, to prefer a husband to a brother?"

"Not my human nature," said Marjory, laughing. "Besides, I should think it wrong and treacherous to have any such ideas until——" She stopped suddenly.

"Until what? Why won't you tell me your deep plan in Gerald's behalf?"

"Why should I? It would be nothing to you."

"Yes, it would. Your devotion to him interests me as a psychological phenomenon; and it is pleasant to find that I have any power of interest left."

"I dare say! You want to pry into the most sacred part of my life, that you may make a ludicrous study of it, like those books you are pleased to call 'goody.'"

"You think I would do that to any feeling of yours? You misjudge me. No,—I haven't forgotten the days when we were friends at Thorne."

As he spoke, he was looking at her in a half dreamy way, which suddenly made Marjory blush. At this moment she felt Lina's eyes on her, and started to her feet.

"By-the-bye, talking of Thorne," she said, going to the table—"I wonder whether you have seen this?"

Hugh followed: and took from her hands the album open at a page whence that sad portrait of poor vanished Jessie smiled in proud consciousness of exalted station, from its bridal robes. When he received the book. that dreamy expression had not faded; the hardness in his eyes was softened, as so often with Marjory:—but one glimpse of the photograph acted with magical effect. At once his face clouded; he winced visibly, and closed the album.

"Yes, I have seen it," he said shortly.

Marjory's blue eyes widened in surprise, then glanced instinctively at Lina. Lina was gazing at Hugh, with an expression beyond Marjory to fathom. It was not only dislike, but cool observation, and mistrust,—and something else—as if a sudden notion had struck her. Hugh did not observe it. He was looking down, gloomy and bitter again.

"Is that book yours?" he inquired, after a pause.

"Yes."

"Why do you keep that photograph there? I wish you would take it out."

"Why should you wish that?" said Marjory, mystified.

"She had nothing in common with you. You believe in her, because of her face. No doubt many others have believed in her: and found their mistake.—I tell you, I can't bear to see that face of hers there, in your book!" He spoke with suppressed passion.

"What do you know against her?" said Marjory—"She was vain and foolish; but, I hope, nothing worse."

"You *hope!*" — he repeated cynically: "'Charity hopeth all things:' but I fear it is often disappointed."

"I would bear that, to be on the side of charity! How changed you are! I remember you were never more irritated than by suspicious—'codgers,' you used to call them."

"You are not changed, at any rate," he said, suddenly smiling: "You are just the same as eight years ago, only intensified. You had that same devotion for 'Gerald,' even then. I'm glad your friendship for a party who shall at present be nameless," he added, lowering his tone—"has failed in transforming you."

"I only wish I were half as good as she is," said Marjory, reproachfully.

He smiled again.

"What constitutes goodness? Sanctimoniousness—or scandalisation—or what? Is disagreeableness a necessary component of it? or is such a pair ever to be allowed, as goodness and toleration in harness?"

"Think of dear old Lady Thorne! She was good:—a saint in its best meaning," said Marjory.

"Yes, but she was old; she had had long acquaintance with the world and all manner of its people. Young saints must be intolerant, I suppose!—If tolerant, they would not be saints; if saints, not tolerant."

"Your experience has evidently been unfortunate."

"It has at least been this:—that if a man's religious views happen to differ from the generality—never mind his heart, brains, morals, anything else,—he is anathema, of no account, a leper, straightway, to true saints. I suspect you are not a saint.—Are you?"

"No, indeed: I wish I were!"

"Don't wish that! If you became a saint, you would have no more to do with me."

"I should be all the more anxious to——"

"To convert me? No doubt:—but sup-

pose you found that impracticable. Now mark what I say! If you are hungry, ill, or homeless, saints will help you:—they add to their fund in the Heavenly bank, you know, by that. But if you have difficulties of another kind—mental doubts, for instance, inability to swallow all their beliefs,—if you are at all 'unsound,' and therefore, I should have thought, from their own point of view, more to be pitied than any other class of sufferer—in such cases, the saints will scout you, glance at you from the other side of the street, with mild contempt;—in fact, regard you as pitch, of which the mere touch would defile."

"You have met with unfavourable specimens," repeated Marjory.

"Have I? Your friend over there is one: and you consider her a favourable one," said Hugh, again lowering his voice: "If you listen to her, I feel sure she will persuade you that, in holding any intercourse with me, you commit a mortal sin. But I hope you will not listen to her; in that respect at least."

At this moment Lina rose to depart. Hugh rose also, suddenly remembering an engagement, and, making hurried adieux, strode off, walking against time. Lina also

had an engagement at a neighbouring house, and could not accept Gerald's proposal that he and Marjory should escort her home. When he returned from conducting her downstairs, he found Marjory in a dream at the window. "Anything wrong?" he asked, coming up behind her.

"No—I was only thinking," said Marjory, with a start: "What were you and Lina talking about? You seemed to find your conversation very interesting."

"Did we?" said Gerald, with heightened colour. "Somehow, it did seem interesting; and yet we were talking of nothing particular—just any little thing that came up."

"Not about your pictures?" cried Marjory. "We had just been looking at them."

"I dare say she thinks them rubbish. I wish you would let them alone, Marjory: you will sicken her," said Gerald, irritably: "She said not a word on the subject; so that speaks for itself."

"On the contrary," cried Marjory, "I never saw her so enthusiastic before. She was delighted with them."

"Nonsense," said Gerald.

"You unbelieving boy! I will tell you her very words. Remember! She never pays

compliments, and she is never lavish of praise."

Then she repeated what Lina had said:—

"This is more than mere cleverness. Your brother will be famous some day."

"She said that!" Gerald exclaimed. Marjory looked at him, startled by his tone. A flush of joy, of rapture even, had risen to his very temples. He could scarcely have seemed happier, had Raphael himself pronounced the verdict!

For the first time Marjory's unselfishness failed her. It could hardly be for its intrinsic worth that he thus valued Lina's praise! And, if not, why should this have such power, when her own so often failed,—or, if not utterly failing, proved powerless to arouse more than a feeble gleam of hope? Why? There was the question!

Marjory thought again of the Ideal:—and her heart ached.

CHAPTER VIII.

"So strangely, mysteriously, wonderfully
Her presence seized upon my inner life;
* * * *
Beloved at once, I felt graved on my heart
'Tis she, or none on earth."—*Schiller.*

But such pangs were not of long continuance in Marjory's generous nature, and she soon forgot them in devotion to her work.

"Gerald, may I read my story to you?" she said one evening, entering the little parlour. The lamp was just lighted; Gerald sat at the table, sketching in pen and ink some fancy which had come into his head.

"I can't work always alone; I don't know how I am getting on,—I am tired," said Marjory: "Would it plague you, Gerald, to listen?"

"My dear Marjory, you work too hard," cried Gerald, starting up. "You must not overdo yourself; how selfish I am to let you toil in this way! And after all——"

He paused, and drew the arm-chair to the

table, that Marjory might rest, the light falling on her manuscript.

"After all, to no purpose, perhaps—you mean that. Yes, I know—I know very well! But remember what I told you the first night I came here. It is that which makes me hopeful, Gerald!"

She stopped, on the verge of tears, the reaction from over-excitement.

"Now let me hear the story," said Gerald, soothingly.

He sat down again, and resumed his pen; and she turned to the beginning, and read. Presently she half forgot that the story was her own, and felt interested, as in the work of another. Gerald also looked up from his etching: the pen lay idle in his hand: soon he laid it down altogether, and turned towards Marjory, his elbow on the back of his chair. Now and then he said: "Capital, Marjory!" or, "Well done!" or, "I never knew you could write like this!"

She stopped at last, out of breath.

"That is not all?" said Gerald.

"No, a good deal more is finished; but I had better leave it for another time. Do you really like it, Gerald?"

"Like it! Why, Marjory, it is first-rate, far

beyond my hopes. It is better than nine novels out of ten."

He had risen, and was walking up and down the room.

"Yes, indeed," he repeated: "I have read fifty not half equal to it! and yet they get published, somehow; and, if they, why not this?"

He paused in his walk, stooped, and kissed her: a very rare occurrence.

"I am not worthy of such a sister," he said. Some inward compunction seemed to strike him.

Marjory laughed and clapped her hands, with almost childish glee.

"You have made me as happy as Mr. Harding would make you if he said that you might turn out a second Michael Angelo!" she cried: "It's not that I dream of becoming famous, or a great author—only just of writing books which will sell! After all, that is a modest aim enough."

"If it succeeds, I will return all you earn for me—with compound interest, I trust. To me the debt will only change hands; but there lies all the difference! Now that I have heard your story, I almost dare to hope."

"You ought to hope, Gerald. Because you know it is not only my work I am depending on."

There was an enthusiasm about this girl, which was strangely infectious. Certainly she read her Bible with the heart of a child! but was not that the right way to read it? Gerald felt rebuked; some voice within him whispered that it was not possible for such faith to be disappointed.

They sat up late that night—Gerald asking to hear more, if she were not tired, after supper. Marjory, in all the first delight of a tyro in authorship, cared little whether she were tired or no! At the end, Gerald proposed that they should meet for the same purpose, every week.

"It will help me very much," said Marjory, "The work will be less lonely. And you can criticise."

"Not that my criticisms are worth much! you should go to Miss Peele for those."

"She has not seen it, yet. I have often meant to consult her: only, somehow, I am afraid. It is foolish to be so impressionable; but I can't help it. If she should throw cold water on it, I should feel out of heart at once."

"But she would not; she would help you. Her advice would be invaluable."

"In one way. But in another—Gerald, don't you see it in Lina? She is so passionless!—like a still lake, which cannot sympathise with tides. It seems to me that she has a certain fixed standard; and whatever comes up to it is right in her eyes; but whatever differs from it, however beautiful, or true, is wrong. I can't quite define my meaning; but—Gerald, don't you understand?"

"I think I do. But, I suppose — we should call an angel passionless, shouldn't we?"

"Not exactly in Lina's way! I'll give you an instance:—Mr. Vivian; she is so terribly hard upon him! she condemns him utterly, seems incapable of entering into—oh, Gerald, I have told you about his troubles:—*you* don't think him utterly hopeless?"

Suddenly it had struck her—what if Gerald should agree with Lina on this point, as on others? She looked at him, distressed by that fear; but his kind smile reassured her: that smile so strangely kind and quiet, for so young a face. But Gerald continually seemed to her less like a young man, just

entered upon the battle of life, than like one who, after long fighting, has reached a height whence he can turn with friendly eyes, to encourage weaker combatants.

"*I* think him hopeless, dear! I should be a hopeless prig myself, to think anything of the kind! Few men come out scathless from such trials; and only those who have gone through them can judge of them. But as to Miss Peele—she is so far above all this kind of thing that she cannot comprehend it. She is too perfect herself to be capable of making due allowance for the force of temptation in lower natures."

At this expression, Marjory's spirit rose in indignant championship.

"Mr. Vivian's is not a low nature," she cried—"I am quite sure of that, little as I know of him now."

"I said lower,—not low," said Gerald, musingly: "No man could ever have been born with such a nature as hers. Women may be half angels sometimes; but men, never.'"

"Then you think Lina half an angel?"

"I?" said Gerald, suddenly crimson:—"My thoughts are of no consequence. You know what she is, or you ought to know," he added with an under-tone of reproach.

He rose as he spoke, taking his bed-candle; and Marjory felt herself reproved.

"Don't be angry with me, Gerald," she said.

"I'm not angry," said Gerald; "I only think you must take care that your sympathy with Vivian does not blind your eyes to the beauty of real goodness—of a spirit that has never known pollution. You know it is only natural that such spirits should shrink from a baser touch."

"I suppose it is," said Marjory, humbly; "perhaps, after all, I should feel the same, if I were as good as Lina.—But I am not."

It might have been only fancy—but she thought that this admission made Gerald's "good-night" more than usually affectionate. He did not contradict it; and they parted without further words.

When he was alone in his own room, he went to the window, leaning with folded arms against the panes, and looking out. The sky was not cloudless; but the clouds were soft, gray, and timid, like one who does not dare to indulge his stormy passions in the presence of a higher and calmer being, who sits with him in his home. For the sky in which those gray clouds floated, was of a still, dark blue, silent, grand; and high en-

throned in it shone the three quarters' moon, with a light only too cold to be radiant. Beneath it the city slept, the dark houses, the closed factories :—only the river seemed alive, with its incessant washing ripple. Gerald remembered when, on many such a night, he had sat in his little room in the far north, a craving, ambitious boy, with a restless heart, and had watched the sky, and wished that he could paint it, thinking of the great masters of old, and then again had wished that he had wings to fly from his trammels—and suddenly had found his cheeks wet with tears from unfathomed depths.

No tears came now; yet he felt much as in those past days. He longed—he longed—for what? What was this new feeling, overpowering that which so long had been his master-passion, making his worship of Art second to another worship, leading him for the first time to regard Art as a means of advancement to something else?—"O Art, my Art, thou art much, but Love is more!" Why did those words haunt him?

Gerald had never been subject to those coarser temptations which seem sometimes strangely interwoven with the artistic nature. He was fastidious, almost to a fault, hard to

please,—or, rather, hard to satisfy; and it was well that a kindly nature, almost morbidly sympathetic, kept these qualities duly balanced. Hugh Vivian, when two or three years younger than Gerald's present age, might have said with more or less truth,—

> "Many a one I have loved for a minute—
> Worshipp'd many a face I've seen:"—

though he could also with truth have added the latter part of the verse. But Gerald had never loved in this sense, even "for a minute;" he would have thought himself cold and invulnerable, had it not been for the dreams of his imagination, which taught him that the object, not the capacity, was wanting.

"One needs must love the highest," he thought; and hitherto he had entertained small hope of finding that highest,—within his reach at least. But what Schiller had written long before—what the young Prussian prince felt, when he saw for the first time, Louisa, his angel-queen:—this had Gerald felt, when he saw Lina on the evening of the concert, in her white robes, the jessamine in her hair:

> "'Tis she—or none on earth!"

Ever since, her face had floated before his mental eyes, as a vision fair, sweet, pure, beyond expression—something which he could hardly realise as verily existing upon earth. At first he had been content to adore from a distance; but, as the fancy deepened, its poetic calm had passed into something less calm than fever—something that filled him with vague craving, making him sometimes happy, sometimes wretched, never actually at peace. Now, as he stood in his window, a strange ache at his heart, he was thinking that the moon, so serene, so high, was like Lina, and he like one of those gray clouds—illumined a little by the pure rays, but not really near her, or worthy so to be. In his fancy, he saw Lina standing in the sky, those jessamine stars still in her hair; he gazed toward her, as Dante gazes at Beatrice in the picture. Unconsciously he began to plan a picture of his own—of a maiden standing even thus, and her lover on earth, looking up with vain devotion.

The lover has no wings, and the maiden is rising—up—where he cannot follow. The moon shines, the stars shine, the maiden shines; the lover alone, far below in shadow, is dark and of the earth. Suddenly a voice

says, "I will help you." Through the shade comes a figure with Marjory's face; but she is not Marjory: she is Art. She comes with hands outstretched; slowly a new power endues the lover's frame. He also has wings; he rises into the light, reaches the shining maiden: she turns, looks at him, and smiles. Oh, unutterable rapture!—and with this Gerald opens his eyes. Tired in body and in brain, he had fallen asleep as he stood at the window, his head resting on his arms.

Now awaking, he found himself still on prosaic earth; but the brief dream had chased away his heart-sickness; he was cheered, his hopes were renewed. He felt that in him which needed only space to become power, fame, glory. Hitherto he had worshipped art for its own sake alone. Now he craved not only for art, but for fame: that he might lay it as an offering at her feet. And, as to Marjory, she should never repent her unselfish devotion. Not in money alone would he repay her; he would find in addition a thousand better ways to prove his gratitude. Despite his fatigue, his castles in the air kept him long awake, imagining, planning.

CHAPTER IX.

"Nay, yet there's more in this.
I pr'ythee speak to me as to thy thinkings,
As thou dost ruminate, and give thy worst of thoughts
The worst of words."—*Shakspeare.*

THE autumn proved unusually fine; and, as the year advanced, Marjory found continual pleasure in the changes of sky and trees. She had seldom time, in these shortening days, for country walks; but the first novelty of the town, with all its world of human life, had not yet lost its charm; she was living still in the magic dream which had encompassed her since leaving Rockswold. The distant hills beyond the river were tinted with soft lights—changeful, but only in beauty; sometimes purple shadows, sometimes golden ones slanted across them; in the morning they were hidden in haze, through which their outlines grew gradually back to clearness. The elms in the College Green were rich in tints; now and then, already, a leaf fell gently, and floated to "its rest

beneath the parent shade." The rooks cawed on, and never missed it.

Often, in the afternoon, Marjory would sit for half an hour on one of the benches placed at intervals below the trees, watching, and listening to the cathedral music in the service of evensong. She went in to the service sometimes; sometimes it suited her better to sit without, and drink in the thoughts which at such hours seemed often less thoughts than voices from the invisible world. She was a strange, solitary girl, living her own life alone in this large city; yet not conscious of loneliness, not yet awake to the longing for a companion spirit.

One day she was sitting thus, when the congregation dispersed, streaming away in units or twos, seldom more, to their respective abodes. A few quiet ladies, with shady hats and dark-coloured garments, came out through the cloisters, taking no notice of any one or anything, as they passed towards the venerable houses skirting the Green. A few more, of a different stamp, younger, brighter, —daughters of the canon in residence, and of the dean,—walked together, fashionably dressed, with young, clear voices, fashionably

accented, and light laughs, echoed back by the hoary towers. These did just glance at Marjory; one girl a little older than herself, glanced a second time, and met the gaze of her bright blue eyes.

"Do you know who that girl is, Mr. Vivian?" she asked, as Hugh Vivian, walking with swift soldierly tread, as was his wont, appeared by way of Chad's Tower: the whole party stopped to shake hands, having known him from their childhood:—"I have seen her often lately here, or in the cathedral. She looks so nice, and her eyes are lovely."

Mr. Vivian gave one quick glance towards Marjory, who had risen, and was moving away.

"She is a Miss Stanhope," he said, shortly.

"What a nice name! They must have come quite lately. I'll make mamma call. Where do they live?"

"Miss Stanhope lodges with her brother, who is a clerk in the old bank, at Mrs. Myers' school."

"Oh!"—The "oh" spoke a volume of disappointment—"I hoped that they were a pleasant family, come to live here. We want some more nice girls at Alton."

"Miss Stanhope is a very 'nice girl,' and a perfect lady," said Hugh Vivian. "To be sure, she teaches—three hours daily, I believe—in the school. Do you still think her eyes lovely?"

"You look very satirical, Mr. Vivian. I never understand you. Good-bye. What a charming afternoon!"

She nodded gaily, Hugh bowed, and they went off in different directions. Mr. Vivian, who was hurrying after Marjory, slackened his steps when he saw her otherwise approached. Lina Peele had joined her; they turned together towards the seat which she had recently quitted. As he met them, he merely raised his hat, and passed on like a whirlwind.

"His expression is quite evil; I know no other word for it," remarked Lina, after an instant's silence. Marjory made no reply. She was squeezing her wrist, which she had been told would check a blush.

"I thought, when the maid said you were not at home, that I would look for you here. I want particularly to speak to you," said Lina.

"I have been sitting on this seat for half an hour, enjoying all the loveliness. Just

look at the hills, and the calm light on the river!"

"It is very nice; I shall come and sketch it some day; but I cannot stay long now, Marjory, and I want your attention."

"Yes!"

"I have had a thought in my mind for many days, of which I cannot get rid; at least, that would require an effort which I am not sure it is desirable to make. Did you not say that that silly Jessie Bellhouse, whom you knew at Thorne, was lost?"

"I believe I did."

"What did you mean?"

"She has disappeared; her mother heard only once from her after her marriage."

"Was not there something mysterious about that marriage? I forget what you told me."

"She eloped from Ripley, and was married secretly in London."

"Her mother had no ideas about the husband?"

"None; Jessie only wrote that he was a gentleman. I remember, at Thorne, she was always prophesying that she should be a lady some day. I was too young then to understand her, but I do now. She knew her

beauty, and trusted to it to win some great person's heart."

"Perhaps even then she had won the heart—or what answered to it—of some one whom she considered great; and that might have been her reason for talking so foolishly."

"I think not; it was only vague chatter. I fancy her head was full of novels, which she applied to herself."

"And Bellhouse could not hear of any Mr. Russell—that was the name, you said?—in the neighbourhood of Ripley?"

"No, Miss Bulkley knew of none. Jessie must have met him in some underhand way. She must have been altogether underhand, I fear, when I look back."

"You acknowledge that? Suppose she agreed with her husband in adopting a feigned name? Such devices are of every-day use, you know; and in this case there may have been some excellent reason for concealing the truth."

"The thing is possible, of course; but, Lina, why should you suggest it? It sounds so uncomfortable, so horribly deep. I can't bear to think of it."

"We are obliged to think sometimes of

disagreeable truths," said Lina, inexorably; "Truth is truth, and ought to be brought to light. You will find directly that I have a purpose in all this; I want only to ask you one more question. Eight years ago you were a child, but now you are wiser; look back, and try to remember. Did you see in those days any signs of a flirtation between Jessie and Mr. Vivian?"

"Oh, Lina!" indignantly cried Marjory, hot all over. She could say nothing more at the moment, for the choking in her throat.

"Did you?" Lina repeated.

"You have no right to ask such questions. I am not bound to answer."

"Very well," said Lina, in the frigid tone which betokened offence; "But you must remember that silence gives consent."

"Lina, Lina!" cried Marjory, rising. "Why will you put such hateful ideas into my head? What is your spite against Mr. Vivian? If you ask me so much, I have surely a right to ask something in return."

"I am surprised at this display of temper, Marjory," said Lina, who, having risen likewise, was pacing the gravel path in calm dignity by Marjory's side. "It does no good,

I can assure you, to Mr. Vivian's cause; and merely shows——"

She paused.

"What does it show?"

Lina was silent.

"I ask you, what does it show?" repeated the girl, losing her self-control. "I hate innuendoes and underhand dealing. Pray speak out at once! You madden me."

"So it seems," observed Lina, calmly. "As to underhand dealing, I am surprised that you should mention any such meanness in connection with me. I suppose it is because we were talking of Mr. Vivian, whose dealings have been very much so, I fear,—and with reason, if one may say it. What does your excitement show, you ask? I reply, it shows a strange interest in Mr. Vivian and his concerns."

"You have no right to speak in this way! You are unkind; you are not what I thought," cried poor Marjory, fairly bursting into tears. She was no stately, self-contained person like Lina; she was under nineteen, passionate, girlish, impulsive. "You vex me more than I can say. There is nothing strange or wrong in my interest in Mr. Vivian. He was kind to me years and years ago, when

he was rich and highly thought of, instead of being poor and trampled on as he is now. I was a poor, lonely little thing, and he was good to me; and I am grateful to him still. I won't believe the horrible things that you insinuate."

"I insinuate nothing," said Lina, quietly. "But, since you accuse me of it, I will speak plainly at once. I observed Mr. Vivian's expression when you showed him that wedding photograph. A singular, a striking change came over it; he had evidently some most painful association with the face. I was struck instantly by the conviction that he knew, or had known, something of Jessie. Afterwards I thought all the circumstances over, and my conviction was confirmed."

"Well, tell me the worst that you suspect. I would rather know what is in your mind."

"You ought to know it. 'Forewarned, forearmed!' I suspect this:—At least," said Lina, correcting herself with her usual precision—"'suspect' is not perhaps the word. I will say merely that I shall not be surprised if, in time, it appears that Jessie's Mr. Russell is no other than Mr. Vivian himself."

"And for this—this—imagination, you

have no better origin than a change in Mr. Vivian's face!"

"A most remarkable change," interposed Lina. "I was watching him closely. It was a look of painful recollection, of mortified pride, as if he were stung—and something indefinable behind. Any unprejudiced person who had observed him would say the same. Then, as I told you, I thought things over—things you know nothing about. I recalled the time when, from your account, Jessie vanished. A little while before, Mr. Vivian had vanished also from Bullingham—no one could tell where. I remember hearing my brother and others remark on his leaving no address; his landlady brought one or two letters which came for him, to my father, not knowing where to forward them. Nothing was ever heard of him in Bullingham again. And it was at that very time—soon afterwards, at least—— If I could find out the whole truth, it might prove, might account for——"

She stopped suddenly, in unwonted agitation.

"What is the matter, Lina?" said Marjory, beginning to soften, as she saw her friend distressed.

"Marjory, you remember my telling you that, as I believed, Mr. Vivian had done our family—one in it especially, now dead"—her voice trembled—"a great wrong. This idea about Jessie seems to throw some light, in a way which I cannot yet explain, upon circumstances which, if fully revealed, might clear ——"

She hesitated; then, perceiving that Marjory was closely observing her, made a sudden effort, became again calm and stately, and said, in her usual tone:

"I will tell you what I mean, at some future time; not at present."

After this both were silent for the length of the green quadrangle.

"I should not have mentioned this notion, Marjory," said Lina, as they turned the corner, "if I did not trust to your good sense not to talk about it."

"Talk about it!" cried Marjory, hotly; "I should think it wicked to breathe a word of such suspicions to any one! For he is innocent, Lina, I am quite positive. I would not believe anything else for the world."

"Not if he were proved to be guilty?" said Lina, quietly.

"He never will or can be, I am sure—quite

sure. There is absurdity on the very face of it! If he married Jessie, why is he not with her? And where is she?"

"That is for him to answer. My imagination is not powerful enough to fill in the details. I only at present feel certain of this one point: that between him and this Jessie some mystery existed, which the sight of her photograph recalled. At all events, there is no more to be said on your side than on mine. If I am mistaken in accusing him, you have no reason to constitute yourself his champion."

"He was so kind to me in past days. He was so devoted to his mother. He had faults, but his heart was good: I am sure—sure of it," she repeated, the more emphatically, as she realised her inability to prove her assertions.

"That is your feeling respecting him; more you cannot call it. Mine is just the reverse. All that I heard of him at Bullingham placed him in an unfavourable light. My father's opinion of him I know; and my father's judgment was universally respected. At the time when you say he was so kind, you were only a little child; what does a child know of character, except as affect-

ing itself? Look at him now! what is he? —An infidel, writing blasphemous articles, scoffing at all that is holy. I know for a fact that he never attends any place of worship. What can you expect of such a one? Consider! whose opinion is borne out by the facts? Yours or mine?"

"But why should you say all this to me? Why should you make me wretched? If he were twice as bad as you say, I could not help it: how does it concern me?"

"You know best," replied Lina promptly. "That it does concern you is evident; otherwise it could not, as you own it does, make you 'wretched.' I have said all this simply as your friend, as wishing your eyes to be opened to—well, let us say, to his possible character. Time will prove how far I am right. Meanwhile, I only ask you to observe for yourself his manner as regards Jessie. You can draw from it what inferences you please;—only be candid! You have been partial, hitherto,—and, Marjory dear, if you will forgive me,—I fear, too much interested in Mr. Vivian."

Again Marjory's face was crimson to the roots of her hair; but she said nothing,—partly

from confusion, partly from anger, which choked her when she tried to speak.

Lina paused, hesitated, continued:

"He seems to wish to flatter you; from motives of his own, doubtless. Don't be deceived by him, Marjory! It would grieve me to see a friend for whom I have such affection, and—and—your brother's sister—led away by him."

"You need not alarm yourself," said Marjory gruffly, moved, despite herself, by Lina's earnestness. "My heart and mind are bound up in Gerald. I have none,—of any consequence,—for any one else."

"That is right," said Lina, approvingly. "Then don't be led by mere feeling; let reason come first. Good-bye, dear Marjory. Think it over."

Marjory could not respond, "Good-bye, dear Lina!" She took the hand extended to her, received its pressure; and, without another word, Lina was gone.

CHAPTER X.

"Roaring torrents have breached
The track, the stream-bed descends
In the place where the wayfarer once
Planted his footstep—the spray
Boils o'er its borders; aloft,
The unseen snow-beds dislodge
Their hanging ruin;—alas,
Havoc is made in our train!
* * * *
——The gaunt and taciturn Host
Stands on the threshold, * *
* * * and asks
* * * *
Whom in our party we bring?
Whom we have left in the snow?
Sadly we answer: "We bring
Only ourselves."

"But thou would'st not *alone*
Be saved, . . . *alone*
Conquer and come to thy goal,
Leaving the rest in the wild."

Matthew Arnold.

The river's shining ripple was just visible beyond gray walls; the elm-trees stood high and still in their autumnal glow; the caw-

ing rooks answered from height to height; the great cathedral rose towards the sky; the cloister arches led away into mysterious shades: the venerable houses stood round about, showing no sign of the ever renewed life within them. How sad it all looked, Marjory thought! She had not thought so an hour before. But now, suddenly, life seemed to her a terrible thing, full of deceit, of guile. The distant murmur of the town seemed like the troubled waves of a sea of bad and stormy passions, on which human life is tossed.

Issuing from one of the silent houses, came a little old maiden lady, in a mushroom hat, and a little trim bachelor gentleman, clerically attired, both with mild and precise old faces. They were a canon, twenty years installed here, and his sister. Arm in arm they walked, with short, prim foot-steps, "taking a little turn" before their quietly luxurious dinner. Here they were, and here in the surrounding homes, were many more, such as they, retired from the shores of that great sea, ignoring its power! Were they human beings at all — these gentle, dear, kindly-looking old people?—or were they a mild species of nonentity, incapable of any

strong feeling? Otherwise, how could they so ignore forces so terrible?

Such at least was Marjory's thought as she sat, bewildered, where Lina had left her, and looked round at the gray old buildings, and strove with the ferment at her heart. Around this peaceful quadrangle were gathered an estimable and amiable assembly, richly gifted in money, in position, in influence, yet more or less shut up amid these gifts—their eyes and their ears closed to the very existence of some of the world's mightiest moving powers. This or that was shocking, was improper, was undesirable to be considered: therefore they turned their backs to it, while its surge rolled in, and swept away millions of human creatures, less favourably placed. Marjory could hardly have told why with such indignation, such compassion, she watched the placid little gentleman and lady as they paced round and round the quadrangle. But the contrast between the seclusion, the hallowed calm, and that awful gulf called Vice, of which her talk with Lina had opened a glimpse, seemed almost to overwhelm her.

Yes, that gulf, with its lurid flames, lies close to us all. We may ignore it, but it is

there: and our choosing thus to ignore, our fastidious shrinking, may be the unconscious means of plunging in its depths some less fortunate fellow-being, whom otherwise we might have warned. Under our feet, only severed by a thin crust from the strata which we call Society, that black gulf burns. Close to you and to me. Perhaps, mercifully, we ourselves are safe from it, but others—some very near to us, are not safe; and let us not forget, we might have been as they! How the flames roar and rage as one goes near! we may shrink from them in abhorrence; but, for some, those flames have an attraction. A magic veil is over their eyes: perhaps a little care from us, a little watchfulness, a little sympathy mixed with our condemnation, a tender hand stretched out at the right time, might charm that veil away. Meanwhile we shut ourselves up in our refinement; the flames roar on: down into them go the precious bodies and souls, made for so different a purpose! They are swallowed up, perished; we know nothing, and so care nothing.

Nothing yet. A time when we shall know, and care, is to come.

Marjory's imagination, easily fired, had

derived from Lina's suspicions a whole new world of thoughts. At first she resolved that she would cast those suspicions from her. But then the question would force itself, What if they should be true? and, if true, what manner of man must this Hugh Vivian be? Such stories of deception, of desertion, were to be found every day in the papers: of common occurrence, in one class or another, in life. How should she dare to assure herself that, because he could be pleasant, because he seemed to be kind-hearted, because he was unhappy, and interesting to her, he was beyond possibility of crime. He had not religious faith to guide him, she remembered, with a stab at her heart. Perhaps Lina was right in calling her partial. Something in him had taken her fancy, from the time when she was a child at Thorne. Thorne had been an Eden to her memory; now sorrow had come into that Eden, and treachery, as into the Eden of old. Was this what she had read in books of the hollowness of life? Were there, after all, no such things as real happiness or purity? Once more she recalled that scene when, even in those days, he had horrified her. Ah, that had been a glimpse into the passion

of his nature—a nature which years had strengthened, which infidelity had robbed of restraint.

Then, as to Jessie. She could not have analysed, she did not try to analyse, this sharp pain at the thought of Jessie. Yes; she remembered now! Now, alone, old memories came thronging, old words rang in her ears. Once more she was a weary child in Miss Evie's bed, and Jessie's face was bending over her pillow. "I'll be so much obliged if you won't mention to mother that you saw me in the plantation." The very look, the very tone! had the air spoken, putting on a form of long ago? Marjory looked round, half fearfully; but all was still. Only the old canon and his sister were still pacing around that calm quadrangle.

Why had those words never struck her in the same sense before? Had she been blind, deaf, stupid? or only simple? even now, what was the truth? Had he felt but a passing fancy for Jessie? or, if more, how deeply had it struck? There was no sure ground in those "trifles, light as air," which she remembered: yet, coupled with that look which Lina, and she also, had observed, they had a double significance. Yes—she also

had wondered, many a time, at that look, as of some burning recollection, caused in a moment by the mention of Jessie's name, however lightly before he had been talking.

And she could not think of one fact to prove that it did not mean what Lina suggested. Lina appeared to know him, in some ways, more intimately than she did. Lina was too calm, too reasonable, to suspect any one of actions of which she had no cause to judge him capable. Marjory had pitied, rather than condemned, his religious scepticism, on the score of his trials; but now it occurred to her that this scepticism might arise from indifference, together with a natural disinclination to confess truths which would condemn his own life. It might be that, through all these changeful years, he had been growing more corrupt in heart. It might be that he had drifted ever further from all that is best and highest. And yet, if so indeed it had been, where was her prayer?—that little prayer to which she had been so constant?

The autumnal afternoon was closing in. Beyond the hills a band of yellow light was gradually widening; a shiver swept the heights of the elms: it was suddenly colder.

Marjory rose, and turned slowly homeward. She had felt so happy, so peaceful, when she came out, only two hours ago. Now all seemed changed,—the tints more sad than beautiful,—the river, as it flowed along, had a melancholy tone. The first little rift had begun to show itself in the lute of her Alton life. She resolved that she would try not to dwell upon Lina's notion, and, if she could forget it, think of it as absurd. Yet all the time she knew that that awful possibility would never be long absent from her mind.

Six deep, deliberate strokes pealed from the cathedral tower. She quickened her pace, ashamed to find that she had forgotten Gerald. He was not, however, at home when, out of breath, she reached their sitting-room. He had come in at his usual time, Priscilla said, but had gone out again; and Marjory had taken off her things, and had made the tea, which was usually half an hour earlier, before his step was heard.

Entering, he threw himself back in the easy-chair, looking fagged and out of spirits.

"O Gerald, I am so sorry!" cried Marjory: "I wont be so late again."

"It doesn't matter," said Gerald, listlessly:

"I wanted a turn. Give me as strong a cup as you can, please."

"Where did you go?"

"To look for you. Priscilla said that Miss Peele had called, and I thought you might have gone up to Albion Square."

He was bending forward over his tea, stirring it slowly; Marjory did not observe the flush upon his face.

"Lina followed me to the College Green, and then went home alone. She had an engagement."

"I can tell you where it was," said Gerald, gulping his tea down: "Another cup, please, —I'm awfully thirsty."

"Why, did you meet her?"

"I walked behind her all down the Friars, and to the orphanage. And soon after," said Gerald, rising, and going to the window, "I saw her in the orphanage garden with that fellow Throckmorton. I wonder how often he joins her there. Things are certainly convenient for parsons!"

"He is very musical, you know. He superintends the singing, and Lina helps him."

"She does, does she?" said Gerald. He had put down his second cup of tea, untasted,

in the window-seat, and was leaning against the frame, his back to Marjory.

"What chance could any fellow have against a parson?" he observed in a gloomy undertone.

"Are all parsons so very irresistible, then?" said Marjory, laughing.

"It's very well for you to laugh, Marjory; but Throckmorton would be more than human if he didn't make due use of his opportunities. That orphanage is a famous cat's-paw," said Gerald, savagely, drinking his tea as if scalding were a relief.

"Gerald, what a shame!" cried Marjory. "You wouldn't have him neglect his work? Lina would be shocked, and think you profane, if she heard."

"To me it seems much more profane to make a *rendezvous* of the orphanage. *She* doesn't! I don't mean that she does," cried Gerald, excitedly, as Marjory was about to speak—"She is quite innocent, I know, of all but the highest motives; but, if there be nothing else in him, he's more than man,—as indeed she considers him."

"She doesn't care a straw for him; of that I am sure. The eldest orphan is going to service, and Lina has heard of a place.

She was telling him about that, no doubt, when you saw them in the garden."

"But you can't pretend to say, Marjory, that you haven't noticed Throckmorton's admiration? I won't call it more than admiration—at present. What it ends in, remains to be proved."

"He certainly does admire her. But so does almost every one."

"'Almost!' Who does not?" said Gerald, half angrily:—he was in a strange, excited state, this afternoon, thought Marjory:—"You have something behind, Marjory—I see it. Tell me at once. Is she engaged to Throckmorton?"

"My dear Gerald, what an imagination! Nothing of the kind. It is only, since you ask, that I have once or twice thought he did seem rather smitten. But I don't believe he has any intention of proposing to her, or to anybody. He is strong upon the celibacy of the clergy."

"That I think nothing of whatever. Many a man is that, until he is forced to change his mind. You have noticed it, then! It is not my fancy.—I may as well give up all"—he checked himself suddenly.

"Mr. Stanhope! Mr. Stanhope!" cried

a cracked voice, followed by a rush of noisy boots. Marjory opened the door; and in burst Lewis Harding: his red hair in dire confusion, his jacket dusty, his inky fingers holding an open letter.

"Mr. Stanhope, quick! Sally's after me! Sally said I mustn't come till I'd 'cleaned me;' but I couldn't wait. Read this!"

He thrust the letter into Gerald's hand, and instantly disappeared under the table. Marjory had no attention for this manœuvre; she had caught sight of the signature, and flew to look over Gerald's shoulder.

"Dear Lewis,—

"I shall be at Alton in a day or two, and will look in on you; and you can introduce me to your friend.

"Your affectionate uncle,

"Thos. Harding."

"'My friend' means you, Mr. Stanhope," said a squeaky voice beneath the table-cover. Marjory clasped her hands in a rapture, and gazed at Gerald. She had thought that he would be half transported with joy; but he did not look as she expected. A flush had indeed risen to his face; but anxiety—the anxiety from which his recent words had

sprung—was still its prominent expression. He seemed hardly to take in the meaning of the note, his thoughts were but half with it.

Perhaps, thought Marjory, he could not realise at once that he was truly to meet the great master—an interview with whom, as he had once told her, he would have begged his way to London to obtain! Here was his wish close at hand:—and was it no more to him than this?

"Is Harding here?" said Miss Pilkington's manly voice at the door.

CHAPTER XI.

"Then a voice cried, 'Rise, O master!
From the burning brand of oak
Shape the thought that stirs within thee!'
And the startled artist woke."—*Longfellow.*

THOMAS HARDING, R.A., was a great master in his art: great both in natural gifts, and in the labour which improved them. In some respects he was altogether original, forming a school of his own; in which he trained a choice assortment of disciples. To be numbered among these was in itself a proof of artistic merit: for he was fastidious in his selections, undertaking none who were not of decided talent. The sham of it shrank away at his approach; on pretentious stupidity, it must be confessed, he was even unnecessarily severe.

He lived not only by his art, but for it and in it. A bachelor, his movements were untrammelled, and they varied in accordance with his work; but the place he loved best on earth was Rome, where he had a studio, and where every year, as his friends observed,

he lingered longer. His chief English tie was the boy Lewis, only child of his only brother, whose widow had married again; and for Lewis's sake alone had he consented to give Gerald the benefit of his opinion. From the obscure young man himself he expected nothing; and indeed it had so often been his painful duty to discourage presumptuous aspirants, that this duty had, by practice, ceased to be painful, and had almost become a pleasure! His character for plain, even blunt speaking, was widely known; and Gerald was well aware that the truth, neither more nor less, would now be told to him.

"To-day I shall know whether I am an artist or not," he said to Marjory, on the morning when Mr. Harding was expected.

"But you don't mean to give up hope if his verdict is against you? He is not infallible."

"He will be, to me," said Gerald; "I have perfect faith in him. And, if he says that I have mistaken enthusiasm for talent, I shall not be surprised."

"Gerald," said Marjory, timidly, as he started for the bank—"that picture of the 'Ideal;' you have taken it away. I do want Mr. Harding to see that."

The quick flush which Gerald had not yet outgrown, came in a moment, red and hot, all over his face.

"No," he said, "I can't. These that I have chosen are enough."

He stooped to fasten his boot-lace as he spoke, and then was gone, while Marjory was still casting in her mind how to persuade him without betraying her discovery.

The eventful hour arrived. Mr. Harding, escorted by Lewis, entered the little sitting-room, wound up to be patient and forbearing. He was a tall man, with an abundance of gray hair, and a powerful frame which gave no evidence of sedentary occupation. He might, from his appearance, have been a mighty wrestler, a second Goliath. Were this remarked to him, he would have said, So much the better! that the business to which he devoted himself was no poetic dream, but real work; worthy of strength and substance in its workers.

Beside him, Gerald looked younger and more boyish than usual; but there was ever an unconscious dignity in Gerald, beyond the power of circumstance. No one ever despised or looked down upon him, though the reason might not always appear. Marjory,

trying to scan him from Mr. Harding's point of view, felt satisfied, and proud of her brother. His clear gray eyes met the critical eyes fearlessly, yet with reverence; their expression recalled to Marjory the old lines :—

> "He either fears his fate too much,
> Or his desert is small,
> Who dares not put it to the touch,
> To win or lose it all."

Through long years Gerald had been learning how sublime it is to suffer and be strong. He did not fear his fate, now that, at last, he felt it about to be decided. As to his desert, there was no doubt of that, Marjory thought —if only Mr. Harding would think the same!

After a brief introduction, straight to the point went the great artist; for he held time to be precious.

"My nephew has told me that you desire my opinion on your drawings."

"I should value it more than I can say."

Only Marjory, who knew him so well, could see that his heart was beating faster than usual.

"But, first, I must warn you—I have often had to offend people," said Mr. Harding, a

kindliness, not previously apparent, growing in face and voice; "I shall tell you nothing but the truth."

"The truth is what I want, sir; I am prepared for the worst."

"Very well then, worst or best, let us have it," said Mr. Harding, rising; "Where are the—drawings, or whatever you call them?"

Marjory felt somewhat indignant at this; but Gerald only smiled, and brought four paintings which he had chosen as specimens. Then he fell back a little, and waited.

A silence of full five minutes followed—five minutes of painful suspense. When, at length, Mr. Harding spoke, his voice seemed strangely sudden:

"Is this a copy?"

"No, sir."

"Entirely your own?"

"Yes."

"You are an ambitious young dog, at any rate. Let's see the next."

Neither Marjory nor Gerald could tell what was in his mind, as he turned to the second picture.

"You are entirely self-taught, I think? No school of art, or anything of that kind?"

"I have learned nothing but what I could pick up, sir, from books and engravings."

"Hand over," said Mr. Harding.

Another silent interval, while the third picture was studied. Then came the fourth, the "bridge."

"That arch is out of drawing."

"A great deal is, I fear, sir; but I meant to alter that," said Gerald. He cast a look at Marjory; and she saw that his heart was sinking.

"You had found it out, then; that's something. Where did you get all these faces?"

"They are faces I have seen, chiefly; some I imagined."

"Dreamed of them, eh? Well!" He looked again into the picture, as if studying every part. Marjory expected a mingling of approval and disparagement; Gerald, a sentence of hopeless mediocrity. Neither was at all prepared for his actual words, as he turned from the table.

"I wish you were my son!" he said, laying his hand on Gerald's shoulder.

"Sir!" said Gerald. Marjory, more clear-sighted, started to her feet, all aglow.

"I tell you, I wish you were my son. You should have been the first artist in Europe!"

"You are making game of me," said Gerald, bewildered.

"I am not. I said I should tell you the truth, and that is it. You have great powers; you must open your eyes to them. Somebody says there are two ways of finding one's own level. Yours is higher than you take it for; you are too modest, boy," said Mr. Harding, who was now pacing the room, while Lewis, transported with delight, danced privately in a corner: "It is dishonesty to waste our gifts. I tell you, you have genius in you; I see it in every one of those pictures. There are faults, crudities, both in colouring and in form; but there is genius. Think of that! Why, my young fellow, I know men who have been daubing away for forty years, and have made very fair names, and fortunes, too, who would give their lives for one spark of genius. And here you have a stock of it, ingrain!—to be made the most of, sir; mind that!"

"How can I make the most of it?" said Gerald, speaking as in a dream.

"Give yourself up to it, body and soul.

There are plenty of bank-clerks in the world: throw this up; it is a case of Pegasus in the pound. You've already lost time enough, and too much. Send in your notice to-morrow morning—to-night, if possible; and, when you are free, come along up to me in London."

For a moment, while the great artist spoke, Gerald's face flushed high; but, as quickly, the colour faded.

"Mr. Harding," said he, in that quiet way which covered—only Marjory knew how much: "I have not words to tell you how I wish that this could be. But it cannot. I have no money."

"Well, I guessed you were not overburdened with that; else why on earth should you be a bank-clerk?" said the artist. "But it would be a downright sin that a talent like yours should be lost for lack of money! I tell you what, young fellow; you come to me, and I will teach you all I can, without a farthing of money: the fact is, I shall find it a pleasure. For the rest, while you are my pupil, I will engage that you earn enough in the way of your work to give you bed and board, and something over, if you are careful. This for a couple of years or so, and then

you will be independent of me, or any one. Now, what do you say?"

"I thank you inexpressibly; but I have more than daily necessities to think of. I am hampered by a debt, which I am bound to pay before I can consider myself free."

"A debt! That's bad. How comes a young fellow like you to be in debt?" said Mr. Harding, fixing his keen eyes on Gerald.

"It's not my own, sir; it was bequeathed to me. I would explain, only I might try your patience. It is £200, with interest. Here, with care, I can pay £28 a year of it; but I could not be sure of doing that regularly if I left the bank. You see, sir, if I were dependent upon your kindness, you might die—forgive such plain speaking; or I might not turn out as you expect; and, then, what of the debt?"

Mr. Harding meditated a second or two, his eyes still fixed on Gerald. Then, in an abrupt manner, he rose and looked at his watch.

"Well! my time is gone. I am due to this young fellow"—putting his hand on Lewis's shoulder: "But I can't leave the matter so. You dine with me at 'The Sun' to-night, and we'll go thoroughly into it."

Gerald thankfully acquiesced; and, with a hasty bow to Marjory, the artist went his way.

"Gerald," said Marjory, coming to the table where he stood, still as in a dream, "there is no doubt now about your vocation. It shall not fail. You shall be set free."

Then she kissed him, and went away alone to her room.

They did not meet again until his return from "The Sun." Marjory had sat up for him, writing. When he entered, a feverish excitement had flushed his cheeks and brightened his gray eyes. Marjory jumped up, and drew the arm-chair into its place for him, seating herself on a low stool at his feet to hear his story. This was their frequent attitude in an evening, when their work was done and Gerald was tired. He was generally tired at night, after his hours of uncongenial toil; and Marjory had often felt a little anxious, when at such times she saw on his young face a careworn look which made it almost haggard. But in the morning he was always fresh again, and ready for his task.

"Marjory!" he exclaimed now, "That Harding is—I can't say what—more than I

ever thought him. Such a vision I have had to-night! Fancy learning under him; first in London, among all the life—real life, not vegetation—then, better still, at Munich, Venice, Rome. To go where the great masters worked—to follow them. Oh, to imagine it seems half enough! If only our poor grandmother could come back, with her wider knowledge, and free me from that debt!"

"Did you tell Mr. Harding all about it?"

"Yes; and he would actually have lent me the full sum: but I would not consent."

"Oh, Gerald! are you sure you were right?"

"Quite sure. It would only be to exchange the debt without the same security of payment. I have a fixed salary here; all else is uncertain. I showed him clearly that I am bound for the present. Then he told me, if I could in any way get free towards the end of next year, to write to him; and that, in such a case, he would take me, with a party of select pupils—select as to art, you understand—for the rest they may be butchers, or bakers, or candlestick-makers, for aught he cares—to winter at Rome; stopping at a few principal places, for pictures or sculpture,

on the way. Some of his best pupils go with him in this manner every year: they pay him a good premium, but he would take nothing from me. I would be his slave through life," cried Gerald, with enthusiasm, "if that would repay him! So there is that hope, that chance rather—if by any means I could get free before the end of next year. But, oh, how mad I am even to dream of it!"

"No, Gerald—it may be possible. Listen to me. I have been thinking, and calculating. You know I hope that my book may be finished, and published, by the spring. Lina knows a young authoress who got £80 for her first book; and it was not at all a remarkable book, either: and for her second she got more. Can you tell me any reason why I may not at least hope for the same? Then, by this time next year, you will have saved, at your present rate, about £40: there would be £120 at once. And, if the book succeeded, the publisher would agree to take another; £80 more in prospect! and so the whole £200 would be made up."

"The days of miracles are past," said Gerald, with a smile.

"This would not be a miracle; it would

be only ordinary success. Or say, if you like, that I get, not enough to clear the debt —but to reduce it so far as that the balance may be safely left to be paid off from your work with Mr. Harding."

"That does sound more practicable," cried Gerald, warming. "He guaranteed that I should earn a certain amount.—Well, Marjory, perhaps—I do not know—it may be enough to found a hope on. It all depends on this: whether your writing succeeds, or no."

"I do think it must succeed. I have taken such pains!—and, Gerald, I have prayed for success so earnestly. It is the fashion now to scoff at prayer, and to call it irreverence to speak of God, as the Bible speaks of Him, as our Father in Heaven. But you don't agree in this, Gerald?—Gerald, are those promises nothing?"

This girl, brought up in the loneliness of nature, among hills, and woods, and fields, with little other company beyond books and her own thoughts, had grown to realise the unseen Presence which encompasses the world, almost as though it were seen. There was no cant in her, no extra assumption of religion. It was simply that, to her, spiritual

existences were not a fancy, not a superstition, not a theory to be dutifully accepted: but a reality, warm and living.

"Well!" said Gerald at length: "I suppose I may at least hope!—And what it will be to me," he added, suddenly brightening, "if you do succeed, words cannot say."

"That's right!" It does me good to see you smile like that. Hope? I should think so, indeed! After such encouragement, who could help it?"

"Such wonderful encouragement," repeated Gerald: "Only it is like a dream. I have sometimes dreamed of words like those he said to me, and when I woke everything was a blank. But this is no dream. Oh, Marjory, what might life be! It seems to me that through all these years I have caught only a faint glimmer of it; and now it lies open before me. What the human soul is made for!—the beauty and glory to be attained even in this world! The bare possibility of inheriting it is enough, just now. I shall owe it all to you, if it comes. I see no other deliverance. How shall I thank you?"

"There can be no question of thanks between you and me, Gerald. When I see you

an artist, in your own place, the joy of that alone will be almost too much for earth."

"What a treasure you are, Marjory, even to me!—and what a wife you will be, some day!"

"A wife, Gerald!" cried Marjory, scarlet: "What can make you think suddenly of that? I shall never marry. I want to live always with you."

"Thank you, dear," said Gerald. Her quick ears detected a change of tone. She glanced at him: his eyes had grown dreamy, looking far away.

CHAPTER XII.

"Once; and only once, and for one only,
So to be the man and leave the artist."
Robert Browning.

"WHAT are you thinking about, Gerald?"

The flush deepened on his face.

"I was thinking . . . no matter what. I am a fool.—Marjory, you were too young to remember our father and mother?"

"Yes: I have no idea of them, except in imagination."

"I remember both. Our mother was very pretty, you know. She died first. I recollect seeing her lie looking, as I thought, like an angel. I fancied she was asleep; but after that I saw her no more. A year later our father died; I missed him terribly. When he was at home, he had me constantly with him; I respected him immensely, and thought him perfect. Then our grandmother came, and took me away:—it was all strange and lonely. You were gone too. The suffering of that time is keen even now, when I look back."

"You never told me of all that, Gerald."

"I am not often so talkative as to-night! Mr. Harding has been like champagne to me. Well, you know, our parents made what is called an imprudent marriage. My grandmother was constantly harping on it; but it would have turned out well enough, if he had not died. He was rising fast as a barrister —highly thought of in head-quarters, I have found lately. Long before this, he would have been rich and flourishing: it was stopped only by Death."

"They lived always in London, did they not?"

"Yes: at first in lodgings. I once saw an old letter of our mother's—it was lost afterwards—written from those lodgings. Such a happy letter!—one glow of brightness, such as I see in you, Marjory, sometimes. I have often thought of it since we have been here, and fancied that their life might have been a little like ours. They were poor, but not oppressively poor, and growing always better off. Both had plenty of work; but they were very happy. They both loved books, music, pictures, and congenial friends: and they had some of all. It must have been a pleasant life. At all

events, it was life—active and vivid, while it lasted.

A long silence followed: Marjory musing, Gerald looking irresolute, as if in debate with himself.

"According to some people," he said abruptly, "it is dishonourable to propose to any girl before making her a home."

"I can see no dishonour in the matter," said Marjory. "It is just a question of a long engagement; and, if a girl really loved a man, she would surely rather wait for him than marry any one else."

"But suppose he were not sure of her feelings? Ought he, under those circumstances, to try to make her love him?"

"He might be doubtful without cause; it might be a mutual mistake. Many a girl would rather die than betray love for a man who had never asked for it. How could she be certain of his love unless he spoke?"

"But a girl can generally tell when a man cares for her?"

"I think that depends on the kind of girl," said Marjory: "I speak only from guesswork; and yet I think I am right. I believe that there is many a woman who is either too

proud or too humble to build any confidence upon a man's affection unless he has actually told her of it. And then, perhaps, if he thought, as you say, that he should be dishonourable to speak before he could marry—then—especially if he went away—she might think she had been mistaken in fancying that he showed signs of caring for her; and then she would suffer agonies of mortification, and do her utmost—the kind of woman I mean—to regard him only as an ordinary acquaintance. Most likely, as time passed on, she would succeed; and perhaps would marry some one else: and yet, after all, the first might have been the one who was really meant for her, and she for him. No doubt there have been many such cases."

"And all the time a mutual mistake, as you expressed it," said Gerald: "The first poor fellow nursing the thought of her in his mind, hundreds of miles away; working for her, building castles in the air about her: till suddenly he takes up a newspaper,—there's her marriage to So-and-So of So-and-So, at So-and-So, by So-and-So, assisted by So-and-So;—and so it all ends."

"But why didn't he speak?" cried Marjory, reproachfully; then laughed at her in-

voluntary earnestness. Gerald laughed too, a little, and observed that she had better weave the fancy into her story.

"But how did we come to talk of all this?" said Marjory, "when our minds were full of Mr. Harding?"

"It shows their feebleness, I fear," said Gerald, rising. "We had better go to bed and refresh them."

"It is very late; and yet I do not feel as if I could sleep. Oh, Gerald! what a day this has been!"

"You are not sleepy?" said Gerald, putting down the candle which he had begun to light: "If you like, I'll tell you something."

"Tell me anything you like," she replied, her heart throbbing with an indefinable fear. He remained standing by the mantel-piece, his back to Marjory, who had not left her stool; and, resting his elbows on the marble, his forehead on his folded hands, looked down into the fireless grate.

"Marjory, I am going to ask you a question. Women know each other best."

He hesitated.

"Would Miss Peele be disgusted if I told her that—that I cared for her?"

A long pause followed. At length, in a

tone of forced composure, Marjory answered: "There is nothing in you to disgust any one."

"Is that all you can say?"

"I—I don't know. I am sure that Lina likes you very much; and she respects you. She does not respect every one."

"Do you think—is it possible that—that she could ever grow to care for me?"

Once more Marjory was long silent, struggling with herself.

"Yes," she said at last; "I think it is."

"You really think so?" cried Gerald, turning flushed and eager, and sitting down opposite his sister. "You really and truly believe that I might have a chance?"

"I do. I feel almost sure of it."

"Marjory, you frighten me. I am afraid to let myself hope. You—you don't think she cares for any one else?"

The sight of his anxiety, of that agitated face, usually so quiet and dreamy, touched Marjory to the quick.

"I not only 'don't think'—I am certain—that she cares, in that way, for no one else in the world."

"Well, now, listen, I'll tell you," said Gerald, shading his eyes with his hand: "The first moment I saw her, at that concert, I felt

that I had found my ideal; and ever since the feeling has grown, till I am altogether bound to her. It seems as if even to become what Mr. Harding said—the first artist in Europe—would be as nothing to me without her."

"Oh, Gerald!" had nearly broken from Marjory's lips. She restrained herself just in time for her chances of continuing his *confidante*.

"If you feel that, it must be strong indeed," she said.

"I tell you it is my life. I never did live before. Well, I meant to go on and bear it, as I have borne other things; but lately I have thought I couldn't stand it much longer, especially when that Throckmorton——"

"Your poor innocent bugbear!"

"Nonsense, Marjory; I know more of these things than you do. Yesterday I made up my mind that Harding's opinion should decide it one way or the other. If he had said that I could never expect to be more than I am now, I would have given up all hope of her for ever. But now—if I can feel sure of any chance—I'll speak at once, and ask her if at least I may strive to win my way up to her. That hope and the other

can rise or fall together! That's all I dare expect, as yet, I suppose; but even that would be an infinity to me."

"Oh, Gerald, I only hope she is worthy of such devotion!"

"Worthy!" cried Gerald; "She is an angel. You have but to see her face to tell that. Many and many a time her face has been a heavenly inspiration to me."

"So it was once, to me," said Marjory. She did not add the rest that was in her mind. But Gerald observed no omission.

"It strikes me that she is one of those women you spoke of, who would sooner die than show any affection for a man who had not asked them for it."

"As to dying, I don't know," said Marjory: "Lina's feelings are very well governed. But I am sure that she would not allow herself to love any man who did not love her."

"Exactly. And if he did not speak—as you said, how could she know? I could wait better, if it were not for St. Philip's. There she is at that end of the town—and we at this end!—seeing him constantly, while I have only stray chances, and scraps of time. It makes me half mad:—I must put an end to it, Marjory. I'll tell her; and face the worst.

Marjory looked at him with an ache at her heart, and saw in his face all that he did not speak. He craved, with craving unutterable, after Lina. He would be thankful for whatever she would give him.

"After all, if I were to her but a hundredth part of what she is to me, she would not feel it hard to wait three years or so. It might not be more than three years."

"No, it might not. It will not, if you can accept Mr. Harding's offer. Lina is of a very calm nature. Waiting would do her no harm."

"And, if I succeed—some day, I will more than make it all up to her! How I shall delight to surround her with everything she cares for, everything that is brightest, best, most beautiful, on earth! I will work for her, live for her; she and my art will be blended together in my mind. They will inspire me alike, and I shall serve them both."

In his restless mood he had resumed his former place, Marjory still at his feet. He could not see her blue eyes filling, again, and yet again, with tears which she as regularly forced back, or brushed away with her hand. He did not see the blank look which had gathered on that young face, whose bright-

ness but a short time before had strengthened and refreshed him. As she sat silent on her stool, listening to his rhapsodies, it seemed to her that the sunshine was dying out of her life, and leaving only twilight. She had been so full of plans for Gerald—so looking forward to life with him some day,—life in a world of art, of beauty, of noble work, where she would watch his talent grow, and minister to it, enjoy his triumphs, and see the dream of years fulfilled. Yes, that was barely an hour ago; and now—this was what she must work for! For Gerald to marry Lina; to prepare Lina a home: Lina, Lina was everything to him, everything that his art could not supply.

Marjory saw clearly, without morbidness, her own place in his life. He felt a tender and grateful affection for her, as his dear and good sister; he found in her a congenial companion; and there it ended. Whereas, so long as she could remember, Gerald had been a part of her inmost existence. She could not fancy life without him, and her dreams for him. And now, if independently of her, he could pay off his debt, would he miss her at all, should she die, or go from him for ever? An affectionate regret he

would feel; but, so long as he had Lina, would there be any real blank in his days? She could not face the thought, and crushed it down. At that moment the cathedral clock struck one, with a deep peal, resounding through the night. Gerald rose quickly.

"I had entirely forgotten the time," he said, as Marjory looked up: "That startled me. I thought it was a passing bell!"

"You are over-excited," said Marjory, the self-forgetting instinct reviving: "Come, you must go to bed at once; you will be quite worn-out to-morrow."

She lighted his candle and her own, and bade him good-night. As she did so, he held her hand for a moment, and said:

"Marjory, you believe in temporal prayers. Will you pray that she may not reject me?"

Marjory paused a moment, looked down to hide those troublesome tears, then answered gently:

"Gerald dear, I will pray that God may give what is best for you."

"*That* would be best," he said: "Think how it must raise a man to have an angel always with him!"

Marjory's heart was too full for speech. She smiled; and he took the smile for assent.

CHAPTER XIII.

"Life is strong, and still
Bears onward to new tasks and sorrows new,
Whether we will, or no."—*Archbishop Trench.*

The next afternoon, Marjory passed, with the little stream of worshippers and curious strangers, through the deep-porched door of the cathedral. All things seemed always clearer to her in that grand atmosphere. Far above sat the still figures in majesty of conquest. One, with a crown, was looking downward: it seemed to Marjory that he looked at her, gravely, and in rebuke. Another, near, looked upward with steadfast gaze. Hundreds of years he had sat there, one hand between the leaves of a book, open upon his knees, his face, with purely chiselled profile, turned upward, rapt. Earth's clamour was here stilled for a while. Help came to Marjory, and fellowship, in the battle which she had been fighting alone. Others had fought before her, had endured, had trampled this same jealous agony under their feet, and passed on, to the crown. She

knelt in a shadowy place, her face hidden; for tears were falling fast: the tears of a young girl's first grief. She had no human friend to pity them: Gerald least of all must have any suspicion of her feelings. In such case he would wonder at her, despise her, she thought: he would not know her for his Marjory, his helper. So she struggled with herself. While it lasted, the battle was sharp,—but it was not long. She would have fiercer ones to fight some day, perhaps.

"How much of self there has been in me!" she wrote afterwards, in a little book in which she sometimes effervesced: "I am ashamed — I am horrified at myself! I thought that all I wanted was my Gerald's well-being: if this will further it—and he says it will—why am I so wretched? It is horrible, mean egotism. My one comfort is, it does not hinder my wish to work for him; that is as strong as ever.

"Yes—I can go on working, in spite of this hateful pain. I had forgotten the element of pain that must be in all life. All has been so bright, so full of hope, since I came to Alton:—and I have been so happy. This life with Gerald has been a dream fulfilled—and Mr. Harding's encouragement

seemed to crown it ; and now the change has come. It is like the change in that old dream of Thorne, where Mr. Hugh was a fairy-tale prince. I have learned, in books and sermons, that such things must be; but learning of them is different from living them.

"Well, if I am wretched, I suppose I can bear it, as others have had to bear. But what pains me most of all is, that I ought not to be wretched. I ought to be unselfish: and I can't."

Here the effervescement ended abruptly. A cab had stopped before the door, and a note was sent in to Marjory.

"Dear Marjory"—it said—

"I want to see you. I send a cab, that you may come at once.

"Your affectionate friend,

"Caroline Peele."

It was almost six o'clock, and the day was waning; but Marjory had seen nothing, since their early dinner, of Gerald. As she read this note, she guessed where he had been; she put on her hat and jacket again, and ran downstairs. Without orders, which she for-

got to give, the man drove straight away to Albion Square. The streets were full of people, returning from their work; the gas in the shops was lighted; "the busy world a thousand ways" was still hurrying on. The repose of Albion Square struck Marjory now, as always, in contrast to the stir and din. The trees were sad-coloured, growing bare; the paths strewn with leaves—which all the old square-keeper's labours could not keep under. A robin, with a sad autumnal note, was singing in the acacias.

The door of No. 25 was speedily opened, and Marjory was shown upstairs, into Lina's bedroom. Like everything pertaining to Lina, that room was a picture of propriety. Marjory had never yet seen there a book or a garment out of place; it was plain that Lina's well-governed mind was never so ruffled as to forget or disobey the rules of order. The housemaid too was evidently under her complete control; no speck of dust was at any hour to be found in this model temple: the priestess of which now advanced to welcome Marjory.

There was an unwonted flush on Lina's face: not fitful, like the flushes to which Gerald and Marjory were prone, but a fixed

glow, decided as her character. She looked more beautiful, less statue-like, than usual; her dark eyes were brighter, her mouth was somewhat relaxed from its firm lines.

"I sent for you, Marjory, because I felt that, under the circumstances, I could not come to see you. Your brother tells me that you knew of his intention."

"I knew what was in his mind; I did not know that he had come to you this afternoon."

"I had a note from him early, asking if he could see me; and he came about four o'clock."

"Where is he now?" cried Marjory, in her impetuous way.

"I fancy he went towards Heathcroft. I asked him to leave me for a time. I wished to be alone — to consider, — and then it occurred to me to consult you. Marjory, you have your brother's interests warmly at heart; and you know him, of course, far more intimately than I as yet can. Do you think, from your experience of his character, that, if I consented to an engagement, it would help, or hinder, his work?"

"He says it would be the greatest help that he could have."

"But does he deceive himself? It might go on for years. Would not such a tie hamper him?"

"All his own doubt is, whether it would be fair to you."

"To me it would make little difference. I have plenty of occupation here: indeed I do not know how the St. Philip's clergy could manage at present without me. Therefore, for my part, I should much prefer the waiting; and I hope, besides, that I should never fret at what is inevitable."

"Your calmness is wonderful!" exclaimed Marjory.

"I never allow myself to be otherwise than calm; and I should maintain the same principle in my engagement. But, as regards your brother, I do wish for your candid opinion. Would the double aim hinder him in his artistic work,—when he enters on it, I mean? because, if so, I should not think it right to be the means of spoiling his prospects."

"Is this love?" thought Marjory. "I know little about it,—only what I have read. Is this what love ought to be?—and the other, that I have read of, a mere dream?"

She sat silent, staring at Lina.

"Come, Marjory, speak! I only wish to act for his true good. Would he have power to concentrate himself in his work, keeping his hopes about me in their proper place, as secondary to the others? Has he the requisite self-control?—because, if not, I am convinced I should only hinder him."

"Oh, Lina, I don't know," cried Marjory: "He does control himself wonderfully; and yet — he is not like you,—he is not calm, evenly balanced, as you are. I don't know what to say. You must decide:—only do, do, accept him, if you can. If you can care for him, the rest will right itself. I don't mean only 'care for him:' that sounds too cold,—but—I can't say it,—if you feel it, you will know," cried Marjory, flushed and quivering, far more excited than Lina herself. Lina sat perfectly motionless, her hands folded in her lap.

"As to that," she said slowly, "one cannot measure real life by novels and poems. Papa always taught me that sober sense, not romance, should guide us in all important affairs. I sent for you, because I was anxious to come to a sensible conclusion. If I had chosen to be led by feeling alone, I may say—since you are his sister—that I think more

highly of Mr. Stanhope than of any one on earth. Now that I find what power is in him, I am quite surprised by his patience and humility, shown for so many years. Mr. Harding's opinion, however, has only confirmed my own impressions. I believe that your brother has, mentally and morally, the makings of a great man. I believe that he is destined to be a great man: and that the time will come, when any woman, even the highest, might feel proud to become his wife. If I engage myself to him, it will be from a far better feeling than romantic love: from true esteem, and soundly based affection:—and, even in a worldly point of view, I shall not consider it foolish, because, so soon as he can enter on his own path in life, his fortune will be secure. All that I desire is not to check the greatness which ought to be free to develope itself, and to advance him as he deserves."

"You are noble, Lina—you are great too—worthy of him," cried impulsive Marjory, throwing her arms round her friend: "Now let me go and bring him in, that you may tell him everything, and leave him to decide."

"Marjory, it is growing dusk;—it is too late for you to be out alone," cried Lina;

but Marjory snatched up her hat, and dashed away. She walked swiftly, almost running, towards Heathcroft, thinking only of Gerald.

Heathcroft was no longer a place for holiday strollers. The breeze blew damp and sharp from the river; and there on the bank was Gerald, walking aimlessly up and down. She knew his figure from afar, and guessed all the suspense, all the anxiety, that he was feeling.

"Gerald, Gerald! come back," she cried, clasping his arm.

"Why, Marjory!" he exclaimed. How pale he looked! how large and clear were his gray eyes in the fading light!

"I have been with Lina—I am come to take you back. She has told me all that is in her mind. I think there will be no difficulty; only come at once."

He turned, mechanically, and in silence; and they retraced their steps to the square.

"I was watching for you," said Mrs. Peele, opening the door: "Mr. Stanhope, will you step into the dining-room?"

Leaving Marjory in the drawing-room on her way, she went to summon Lina: whose stately dress was shortly heard sweeping downstairs.

"Lina is gone to him," said Mrs. Peele, rejoining Marjory: "She must decide this business for herself. I will not deny to you, Miss Stanhope, that I am taken quite by surprise. She generally treats these things so coolly:—they have occurred, as you may know, before:—and now—I am sure I like your brother so much—he is a most superior young man:—but—but—one cannot help feeling uneasy."

"Because he is so poor, you mean. But you have heard Mr. Harding's opinion?"

"Yes—yes—very hopeful, I am sure. Enough perhaps to justify an engagement. It will be a sadly long one, I fear—her poor papa would hardly approve: and yet—Lina is so like her papa: I have every confidence in her judgment. I trust her sisters will not blame me."

"I don't see how they can."

"Well, no—I hope not: they know that Lina is her own mistress. The house, and even the children, seem often more like hers than mine. I am not afraid, either, that the long engagement will hurt her; she never allows herself to worry. She is training the children in the same way; Lizzie is wonderfully like her already. Poor little Bertha is

more like me; and I can't help worrying. That is a weakness, I quite feel. Lina is above such weakness. Yes, I am sure she is fully competent. We will trust her decision."

Marjory set herself to relieve Mrs. Peele's evident anxiety, by various glowing prognostications concerning Gerald's future: in which, as she was rewarded by seeing, the little woman began presently to believe.

"I have never wished to be worldly," said Mrs. Peele: "I do not approve of worldliness:" and, this admission made, the whole affair assumed a more cheerful aspect.

Thence the conversation diverged to Mrs. Peele's own personal matters; which she found it exceedingly refreshing to discuss with so sympathetic a listener. By degrees, as their *tête-à-tête*, in common with that downstairs, continued long, she began to talk of old times at Bullingham, and of her husband.

"Mr. Peele, in his best days, was very like Lina: just that calm, superior nature:—which made it the more painful to see him at last, quite broken down by trouble. He had been intensely proud of his son; so you may guess what a blow all that was to him."

What did all that mean, Marjory wondered? The words were accompanied by a look of intelligence, as though Mrs. Peele never doubted their clearness.

"To tell you the truth," she said, bending forward, and lowering her voice,—"I may confess it to you, since, if things turn out as I expect, you will be like one of the family,—I always mistrusted Richard. I hardly know why; and I feel that my judgment is not to be depended on; but there was something I cannot define.—I never mentioned this; and Lina has no idea of it, though she thinks I did not appreciate him; but I was less surprised than any one, when the blow came."

"I don't understand," said Marjory. "This is something of which I have not heard."

Mrs. Peele's expression changed suddenly; she looked red and startled.

"Indeed! I thought, as you had been her friend for so long, you would be sure to know. Pray ask me nothing! Don't let Lina suspect that I have alluded to it."

Marjory hastened to promise this; and, Mrs. Peele, with nervous abruptness, changed the subject. But these vague allusions had

seemed to throw some additional light upon Lina's mistrust of Mr. Vivian. The sting of that mistrust, and of the suspicion with which it was coupled, began to rankle more deeply in Marjory's mind, as she sat beside Mrs. Peele, answering and listening, yet thinking all the while of these other things.

Suddenly steps came up the stairs; Gerald entered. His whole face seemed transfigured. Instantly Marjory knew that all was decided, that Lina had accepted him. Mrs. Peele rose; but Marjory sat still, gazing at him, a choking in her throat.

"Mrs. Peele," he said, "Lina wished me to tell you that we are engaged. She has promised to let me work my way up to her. You must not be vexed with me—or afraid."

"I am certainly not vexed;—it is very natural," said Mrs. Peele, nervous and agitated: "And I will try not to be afraid. Lina knows best, of course. I am sure I wish you all happiness."

She pressed his hand, and, by a sudden impulse, raised her face to kiss him. Gerald looked deeply gratified, thanked her, and returned the pressure with a warmth which caused the little scene to end in an irrepressible cry from poor Mrs. Peele! She hastened

away to Lina; and the brother and sister were left alone.

"Gerald, I am glad—very glad, and thankful—for your sake," was all that Marjory could say.

She felt as though the words were cold; but they were not cold to Gerald. The whole world was *couleur de rose* to him. He might have been insulted, ever so savagely, and he would only have laughed. He seemed hardly able to contain himself. He sat down by Marjory, and spoke of Lina—of what she had said, how she had smiled.

"I begin to believe that I shall really be a great man some day! If she is with me, I may be anything. I feel sure now that the difficulties will all be conquered: they seem half gone already. This day ten years—even this day five years, Marjory—who knows?"

"Who knows?" Marjory repeated.

* * * *

Some hours later, when the young Stanhopes were starting on their homeward walk, Lina drew Marjory aside.

"Marjory dear, just one word, "she said; "I won't keep you a moment.—I watched from my window, when you left me, this evening, to find your brother; and I observed

that you ran across Heathcroft. Please don't be vexed—but I feel it better to say that it does not look well for a young lady to run in a public place. You have lived so long at Rockswold—I thought I would mention it. That's all, dear. Good-night."

"Good-night," returned Marjory, and followed Gerald, not knowing whether to laugh or to cry.

CHAPTER XIV.

"The look, the air, that frets thy sight,
May be a token that below
The soul has closed in deadly fight
With some infernal fiery foe,
Whose glance would scorch thy smiling grace,
And cast thee shuddering on thy face."

Adelaide A. Proctor.

Now had begun a new phase in Marjory's life. She worked with double vigour—often to the extreme limits of her strength; thinking, composing, writing. As time went on, she noticed that Gerald watched her progress with ever more of anxiety. He guarded her, with jealous care, from casual interruptions; brightened when she felt herself 'inspired!' was visibly depressed, when—rarely enough—her courage seemed to flag. She trembled sometimes when she realised how much depended on her exertions. Yet, on the whole, she felt that the cause was less her own, than His who had created Gerald, his talents, his aspirations; never doubting but that she was furthering the purpose for which

Gerald had been born into the world. Let those who will, laugh at her simple faith! Such was the fact of it.

But, nevertheless, these days were far from happy days to Marjory. She felt lonely, as she had felt long ago, when she was a little child in this same Alton. She loved Gerald so much, so absorbingly: she had not known, till now, how she loved him. It was not the commonplace love of ordinary sisterhood; it was an idealised devotion, with an element not unlike that which he, in his turn, lavished upon Lina. His genius, his whole character, seemed to her beyond compare. She would willingly have been his servant, his slave even, counting her service a joy, if she might have been also his friend—necessary to his happiness.

She was not morbid. It would not have occurred to her to question how much, or how little, she was to him, had not that question, as it were, forced itself. For now she could not but see—although reproaching the pain which came with the sight—how entirely he was wrapped up in Lina. It seemed as though he could not live one day without Lina now. When he was away from her, he was dreaming of her, silent, preoccupied;

sometimes not hearing Marjory's answers when he spoke, often not caring to speak at all, unless of *her*. One afternoon, when the three were together, Lina suddenly observed: "I looked out last night, at half-past eleven, to find what constellations were visible; and there, in the road, was a man, staring up at my window. It is not the first time that this has happened. I think I shall speak to the policeman."

Marjory glanced at Gerald; his face told its own tale. She slipped out of the room, that he might be free to explain. He had been parted from Lina all the previous day, restless all the evening. He could not sleep without gazing at the light which betokened the beloved presence!

> "I am tied to very thee
> By every thought I have;
> Thy face I only care to see,
> Thy heart I only crave."

Those old words of two centuries past seemed now uttered for the first time, in every look, every action, every tone, of Gerald towards Lina.

And as for Marjory—he seemed sometimes to forget her existence! It was all very

natural, no doubt, but no less a trial: especially as she was often harassed by a fear as to Lina's power of appreciating such devotion. Lina had no idea of the perseverance with which Marjory studied her: scanning her every word and gesture, with regard to Gerald. In some points the result was satisfactory; there was no question but that Lina, as she expressed it, was "very fond" of Gerald. She esteemed him highly, behaved to him graciously, and was well pleased to receive his homage. But Marjory, who had her own ideas of that, to her, mysterious and beautiful world called love, felt something to be wanting; and was continually haunted by that mournful old French saying about "*l'un qui aime, et l'un qui se laisse aimer.*" Was that saying invariably true?—a truth of necessity? If she were in Lina's place, she thought, her feeling would be very different from Lina's! It would be joy almost beyond earth, joy to make her tremble, to be thus loved, thus worshipped—and by such an one. Lina took everything, from the beginning, quite naturally, with even composure. Allowance must certainly be made for differences of temperament; but Marjory could not help inwardly reiterating her first inquiry—"Is

this love?"—and, after a while, "Will this always satisfy Gerald?"

A deep sadness followed that last thought. For just now, in the freshness of his joy, Gerald was satisfied only to realise that they were engaged, that she had promised to give herself wholly to him, some day—some blessed day, dim and distant, but sure—too blessed not to be sure. Only to sit by her, to hold her hand, to gaze into her face, to call her Lina, to hear her call him Gerald; this alone, as yet, fully satisfied him. But Marjory knew him well enough to feel certain that in a little while he would want something more. And would he ever receive more than at present? Was Lina capable of more?—Ah! that was the question:—one which Marjory could not answer. Lina herself would have said that the answer, whatever it might be, was no concern of Marjory's.

Throughout those waning autumnal days, the sense of loneliness deepened. Marjory grew more silent, more absorbed in her own thoughts, read a great deal to herself. Subscription to the city library was one of the very few luxuries in which the brother and sister indulged. Marjory indeed regarded it not as a luxury, but a necessity, to cultivate

her mind for her work. Now, as at Rockswold, her books supplied the human companionship which was lacking; and in the busy town, surrounded by a multitude of fellow-creatures, this girl, young, healthy, full of life, led more and more the existence of a solitary student.

There was another also in this town, who lived secluded in the midst of numbers; and often now, as Marjory sat alone in the little parlour, or walked alone by the river-side, and round the College Green, her thoughts would unconsciously wander to that other, whose life had once been so different: she would find herself pondering over Hugh Vivian, the change in him, the cloud which Lina had conjured,—over Mrs. Peele's allusions, and "the blow" in which he seemed to have had a share. Sometimes she found herself longing, with an almost passionate desire, to be able to ask him himself what he had done in those days at Bullingham,—whether, indeed, he knew anything of Jessie and her marriage. Despite her anger against Lina's suspicions, she could not, when she next met him, help a certain restraint of manner, the necessary result, to her open nature, of the doubts which had been excited. Her eyes did not

meet his with the same freedom; her tone had a coldness which he tried at first to rattle away by his usual light *badinage;* but Marjory, though she laughed and chatted, still maintained an indefinable distance. Then he tried a little coldness on his own part; but this had no effect. The sudden barrier, of whatever nature, seemed impenetrable.

Hugh Vivian spent more thought on it than he would have cared to confess; sat in his dingy lodging-parlour, speculating on its cause; went through his daily work, wondering about it. One evening he contrived to meet Marjory at Mrs. Carberry's house; and walked straight to the corner where she was chatting with two girls of her own age, determined to fathom the mystery.

Marjory could not help colouring, as he sat deliberately down upon an ottoman at her elbow: the more so, as the girls, foolish and somewhat vulgar, glanced at each other, and simpered; and one of them whispered to her—"You won't want us now!"

She glanced hurriedly at Mr. Vivian, afraid lest he should have heard; but he was deep in his own thoughts. That, in some way, those thoughts concerned herself, she could not but perceive. Her eyes met his, and the

colour deepened on her face; for he did not withdraw them—only looked at her more pointedly, with a half questioning, half gloomy expression. Her own eyes fell, and, greatly to her annoyance, she found that the objectionable girl had observed this pantomime. She touched her companion,—who giggled; both hastily rose, and, shuffling behind chairs and tables, removed to a distant quarter. Marjory, seriously vexed, would fain have followed, could she with dignity have done so; but, this being impossible, she was obliged to remain alone on her chair.

"I did not expect to see you to-night, Mr. Vivian," said Marjory, coldly, doing her best to look calm and unconscious.

"Unpleasant surprises will sometimes occur," said Hugh Vivian, in a provoking tone: "I had a spare hour, and it seemed a favourable opportunity to prepare for a series of studies I am meditating, from second-rate society."

"You are extremely polite," said Marjory.

"If I had thought you second-rate, I should not have used the expression."

"Thank you at least for condescending to exempt me, if you condemn my companions."

"You are very caustic to-night, Miss

Stanhope. Another time you would agree with me."

"In what?"

"In my opinion of the present company."

"Then I should be very ungrateful, when Mrs. Carberry is so kind."

"Kindness is beside the point."

"But not gratitude."

"I stand rebuked. Perhaps we all ought to feel exceedingly grateful to Mrs. Carberry for collecting us together, and giving us at least the amusement of a mutual stare. Nevertheless, I rather doubt the obligation, seeing that such assemblies are her favourite pastime. But I do confess to some gratitude for the pleasure of meeting you."

"Thank you for another compliment," said Marjory.

"Thankfulness misplaced again! I was merely stating a fact. You, wrapped up in your 'Gerald,' have no idea of what that pleasure is to me! When I see your face, I forget for the time that this world is a deceitful old blunder. Years roll back—I am a foolish cornet again—wood-pigeons are cooing, and thrushes singing, in those trees at Thorne. I see the old house rise; the drawing-room windows are open; old

Brush is lying outside in a lazy doze: inside, my mother and Lady Thorne are sitting,—and you are with them, looking at old pictures."

He broke off, to hide a quiver in his voice.

"Brush—Oh, where is old Brush?" said Marjory, dreamily.

"Dead and gone, like the rest. Poor old fellow! he was a faithful friend to me. Yes, he 'went off,' three or four years ago—'like a lamb,' as the old women say—in his sleep. He was worn out, and it was time he was done with: but I missed him a good bit. I thought all that I ever cared for was gone. Then suddenly one day I saw you. I have a fancy sometimes that it saves me from withering up, heart and brain, and all, like a dried leaf, to look at you now and then."

He was looking at her as he spoke; and Marjory, meeting his eyes once more, felt her whole soul stirred by pity—pity, and something deeper, which seemed to thrill all through her. Suddenly, like a rush of cold water, came the dread instilled by Lina. Suppose he should be only a skilful hypocrite! Her face, transparent as a child's, showed the doubt. Hugh paused; and the gloom, which had melted, returned and deepened.

"I see how it is," he said abruptly: "That friend of yours, old Peele in petticoats, has set you against me. I don't know why I should care, either,"—he muttered, half to himself: "But I do. I care terribly."

"It is wrong to be set against any one without good reason," said Marjory, incoherently.

"Exactly. Very wrong. So don't give in to it," said Hugh, with a sudden relapse into his half-jesting manner: "Though, at the same time, I won't deny there may be very good reason for such as you to be set against such as me. But I should like to know, what particular crime Miss Peele has contrived to ferret out?"

"She did not tell me of any crime," said Marjory, simply.

"But she has insinuated that she could, if she would. Ah! the fox is unearthed at last. I see! I've a good mind to summon her for libel."

"Innocent people need not fear what any one says of them," observed Marjory, adopting his own tone, to cover the confusion which, at his correct guess, had dyed even her throat with crimson.

"I'm not so sure! That depends on to whom it is said. Suppose some one whom he respects believes the scandal? I suppose he would mind then."

"I think he need not. His innocence would be sure to come out at last."

"You have a firm faith, then, that justice will eventually win the day."

"So firm, that I could never for one moment doubt it," said Marjory.

"It is an intuitive conviction, I suppose? It cannot be based upon experience, for two good reasons."

"And pray what are they?"

"Number one — you are too young. Number two, experience, I fear, proves something rather different."

"Shortsighted experience, perhaps — or what people mistake for experience: taking a part for a whole, and judging without patience."

"Severe, and slightly vague," observed Hugh.

"Vague, I dare say, because I can't express myself: but it is true, nevertheless," said Marjory, nodding her head.

"What an oracular nod! Only that your physiognomy and that of an owl are so dis-

similar, I should think you were the bird of wisdom itself. Well, according to your belief, Miss Peele may some day discover that there is not so very much less iniquity in certain of her models of excellence than in me, whom she sets down as ink-hued for ever! Only perhaps the iniquity is somewhat different in kind."

"I know Lina is prejudiced."

"You have found that out at last? Hurrah!"

"She may not be prejudiced in your case."

"May not: the barest possibility, be pleased to observe, Miss Stanhope. Remember, I make no pretension to be considered a saint——"

"Certain people are quite as vain of not being saints, as others of the reverse."

"Again such severity?—I had no idea you were capable of it.—I am not one of those—no, indeed," cried Hugh, with sudden earnestness: "I say, simply as a matter of honesty, that I know well I am not a saint: in other words, that I have a terrible capacity for badness. But, granted all of which any one may accuse me, I alone can estimate my own excuses; and, on the faith of a gen-

tleman, I must say that if Miss Peele—by breach of faith in others—can mention any particular sin in my wretched Bullingham life, I, on the other hand, could tell you of special circumstances of temptation which, however unmerciful she might be, would win, I know—I am certain—pity, at least, from you."

His impassioned tone struck Marjory. She looked at him, and if before she had doubted, she now was sure, of the existence of some secret—something of which he was ashamed—connected with his time at Bullingham. What could that secret be? She trembled as she thought of Jessie.

"Well?" he said, as she continued silent: gazing at her as if he longed to pierce the veil which hides soul from soul. "Well? won't you believe me?"

Their eyes met again: again that indefinable thrill ran through her.

"Yes," she said; "I am not your judge; and—I do—I do believe you. But may I ask just one question? There is nothing now—is there?—nothing that—no concealment that I must condemn if I knew it, *now?*"

As she spoke, her innocence of crime stood her in good stead: she coloured only a little

—her blue eyes looked straight into his, only slightly shadowed, as the eyes of a child might be, if it were indefinitely told that a friend had committed some wickedness. A mingled expression of reverence and pride filled Hugh Vivian's fearless eyes, as he looked back.

"Nothing whatever," he answered.—"If your faith in all kinds of inscrutable mysteries be so complete, you may surely place some in me! There is nothing whatever in my present life, or connected with it, that I should be ashamed to confess— to you or to any one."

His tone satisfied her entirely. A heavy weight fell from her mind. The thought of Jessie hidden—deserted—she knew not what —had struck her momentarily with horror unutterable. Now she felt certain that, as regarded Jessie at all events, he was guiltless. How otherwise could he speak thus decidedly, knowing of Bellhouse's blighted old age, of the suspense which only news of Jessie could end?—knowing that any news, even of her death, would be better than this blank silence! No—however else, in the past, he might have sinned, he was innocent of this. It was a baseless, a wicked sus-

picion : — wicked, though originated by Lina.

"You are glad I can say that? Then you have some interest in me," he said, with an indescribable mixture of pleasure and gentleness, watching her face.

"I am glad," Marjory replied, though blushing deeply. "It would be painful to me to think you so very bad, because—because of old times," she concluded, made nervous by his gaze. "Now let us talk no more of such disagreeable subjects."

"And we are friends again?" said Hugh Vivian.

"I don't know what you mean."

"Yes, you do. You know quite well that you have frozen me up into Nova Zembla itself, whenever during the last month I have spoken to you. Now you mustn't let your next interview with Miss Peele bring it all back; that would be, to say the least, deplorable weakness of mind. You see an immense deal of her now, of course?"

"Gerald does," said Marjory, smiling.

"I ought to have congratulated him long ago; but somehow the words stuck in my throat. You'll forgive the confession, know-

ing what you do know. I suppose your brother adores her?"

"He thinks her too perfect for this world: and so she might be, from her face."

"Ah, faces are unsafe guides! I learned that long ago, in a lesson I shan't easily forget."

"From Lina?"

"Oh, no. She was too exact a copy of her father to endanger me! No, I learned that from another face, more beguiling than hers, because more childish and innocent. It looked almost like an angel's face, and proved—more like a demon's."

"Miss Stanhope, *can* I prevail?" said Mrs. Carberry, extending in one hand a roll of music, and pointing with the other to the piano: "Or are the charms of conversation—such conversation—too powerful?"

Marjory started up, and hastened to the music-stool. She saw no more of Hugh alone that evening; but her mind was very full. She did not like to think of that mysterious face which had deceived and undeceived him; but her prevailing impression was certainly not one of pain. Certain words rang on in her ears,—"I do care terribly!" The unpremeditated manner of their utterance heightened their effect.

CHAPTER XV.

"O weary heart of mine,
Is there ever a truth for thee?
Will ever a sun outshine
But the sun that shines on me?
Away, away through the air
The clouds and the leaves are blown;
And my heart hath need of prayer,
For it sitteth alone, alone."

George Macdonald.

The sad autumn days rolled by, and merged into winter. In the country, the change was plainly marked. Stacks of bare hop-poles rose from the heavy soil; the trees spread long-branched and bleak. A little late apple-picking and "swede" gathering lingered on: whence the women returned half frozen, with faces red and rough under their cotton bonnets, and chilled limbs which would long avenge themselves in rheumatism and other aches. For the rest, there was little field-work; dull brown ridges stretched for many an acre, in the place of pleasant clover or golden corn. Mud lay ankle-deep in all the lanes; the cottage gardens had lost their

gaiety; only a few chrysanthemums or Christmas roses brightened some,—and the holly berries were ripening.

There was no such striking difference in Alton. Work there went on much the same—buying, and selling, and manufacturing, from morning to night. But the gas was lighted early; the streets were less crowded; and in the College Green the elms stood, like the country elms, bleak and bare; the decay, at first so lovely, had finished its work, and only one or two dead leaves were left, to flutter in the heights when east winds were blowing. The river was now no more a refreshing contrast to heat and dust; the air that breathed from it was cold, as though it had swept over fields of ice. Yet it was beautiful still, that mighty river; its tide flowed on, regardless of change: still it reflected the lights of sunset and of sunrise, and the moonbeams at night; and still Marjory, now wrapped in winter garb, liked to walk beside it and listen to its music.

The long evenings were very favourable to the progress of her story. She wrote for hours at a stretch, in the little sitting-room, by lamplight. She had grown accustomed to Gerald's absence. When his evenings

were not spent in Albion Square, he was working in his attic, where of late his time had been occupied on a statue of Lina, modelled from clay: Lina standing, a book in her hand, her face half raised, as if she caught the sound of music. The book was one of devotion—such was his idea; in studying it, her ear had become attuned to "heavenly harmonies;" she heard what is not granted to souls more earth-bound.

But this was not his only study of Lina. Marjory in these days was almost weary of the incessant reproduction of that countenance, to him so peerless. He painted Lina looking down, Lina working, Lina gathering flowers, Lina—as he had found her once—reading German with her young sisters, Lina walking in a moonlit garden, Lina as an angel, reflected against a sunset sky, Lina everlastingly. And Lina was quite content to be thus pourtrayed, to be thus adored and idolised by this gifted boy. Some day, she thought, a serene smile hovering around her classical mouth, her name would shine in stories told of the great painter's early life, as his guiding-star, his inspiration. She thought of it calmly, with no conscious vanity, as a fact of the future.

These were halcyon days to Gerald, one long bright dream—a poet's dream of paradise. Even Marjory had no conception of the intensity, the still rapture, of the romance in which he was living. Its charm was too entrancing to admit any fear as to the stability of such a condition. He was enfolded in an atmosphere of one idea, too happy to question his happiness. That November had passed into December, was nothing to him. He had a summer of his own, safe from external changes. Night after night he worked on, in the fireless attic, kept warm by the glow of his inner life—so that he laughed to scorn Marjory's remonstrances.

Meanwhile, the dull sky brightened into a frosty blue. There was sliding and skating upon Heathcroft,—which had been lately flooded, and then crusted with ice,—in the meadows where hay was made a few months before. The weather was very seasonable, said every one; the shops were gay with Christmas decorations, rich with Christmas fare; the old bells rang continually in the city, welcoming the joyous season; and thus Christmas Day came and passed, and the days went on to the New Year.

Mrs. Myers and Miss Pilkington were

spending their vacation with rich relatives, Benjamin and Ambrose in train. The two houses were very silent now: on many an evening they had no inmate but Marjory upstairs; and, below, Priscilla and Priscilla's mother—to whose charge the establishment was temporarily committed. The other servants were gone like the rest. Gerald and Marjory had been invited to spend Christmas at Rockswold; but they had no money to spare for travelling: every penny now, with jealous care, was hoarded or made much of. Nevertheless, Marjory enjoyed her holidays, making diligent use of the long spare mornings in reading as well as in writing, playing and singing for her own benefit, and dreaming over her story—composing no less at such times than when she sat at her desk.

On the last day of the year, after her early dinner, she started for a walk by the river. The towing-path was deserted now; she wandered, with increasing pleasure in the loneliness, into the empty fields. It was something of the pleasure felt long ago in that summer's day walk to Thorne; she went on all alone, meeting no one. The river, flowing with its quiet ripple at her side, seemed somehow to deepen the stillness; the

fields stretched out before her, bare and cold beneath the winter sky. The day was very calm; a robin's clear note resounded from a hedge; all else was silent.

It was long since Marjory had found herself so far from the stir of numbers. She strayed along, watching the river, thinking of its ceaseless tide, of the quiet continuance of its journey, ever on, to the great sea,—the same in these solitary meadows, as in the life-teeming town. Why, on a sudden, did she remember that pause in the lane near Thorne—when she had listened with vague awe to the approaching horse-hoofs? Why, but by one of those mysterious influences which affect us all, though, as yet, from a source beyond our fathoming. Here, unobserved before, in her musings, sitting on the stile which divided this meadow from the next, was Hugh Vivian, deep in thought. Marjory hesitated, ready to turn back; but he saw her, and sprang from his seat.

He had looked gloomy and miserable before; now, as he raised his hat, his whole face brightened; and something in the glance of his dark eyes brought the colour to Marjory's cheeks.

"I did not expect to meet you, Mr. Vivian!"

"I am not so happy, or so conceited, as to suppose that. But what brings you all this way from home? Do you know that you are between two and three miles out of Alton?"

"Am I indeed? I came on and on without considering."

"An old habit of yours, I remember."

"One can think so nicely in a long walk. But I must turn back now, or it will be dark before I get home."

"I'll come a little way with you, if I may. You rouse my curiosity; but I suppose you would not gratify that for the world!"

"What are you curious about?"

"Your late remark respecting a long walk. I wonder what you can have to think so much of."

"Just like a man, especially a critic, to wonder that a girl can think!"

"I was not questioning the possibility—only inquisitive about the subject."

"As to that, I have more subjects for thought, perhaps, than you know of! but I don't see how they concern you. Still, if they were fewer, there is surely nothing

strange in any one's being thoughtful to-day."

"The last day of the old year!" said Hugh: "A melancholy day, isn't it?"

"That depends," said Marjory.

"Well, after all, it is not more so than to-morrow will be—the first of the new one. Another step into fate, another plunge into the unknown—there to be made a sport of—by what?"

"Is this only talk?" said Marjory: "or do you really feel as you speak?"

"If you mean, do I really feel that life is a mistake, and every renewal of it a pity, I must plead guilty. What will happen in this coming year? how many hopes will come to nothing? how many happy young fellows will wake up, as I woke once, to find themselves ruined—not only in money, mind! And these are only a small part."

"And how much happiness there will be too," cried Marjory: "how many joyful surprises! how many deliverances of all kinds—how much cause to thank God!"

Hugh looked at her, smiling to himself.

"It is a good thing to be hopeful, at any rate," he said: "Were you anticipating all

this pleasant fortune, as you walked on in that rapt sort of way?"

"I did not know that I seemed rapt," said Marjory, blushing: "I was thinking how much this past year had brought—to Gerald, and to me: and how much more may come in the next, if only I succeed."

The words had slipped out unawares. Hugh took them up.

"I wish I knew what you are so anxious to succeed in!"

"Why should you care?"

"Perhaps I am of an inquisitive turn of mind. I have seen for months that you have an object in life: and I guess——"

"Well?"

"Don't be angry! I guess it is a literary object."

Marjory hung her head in some confusion, as she felt the scrutiny of keen eyes.

"Not exactly," she faltered, with no more "proper pride" than she had known eight and a half years before.

"Not exactly, because its ultimatum is help for your Juggernaut, Gerald. You are writing a book to get money for him."

At this plain statement of the fact, a strange mixture of feelings swept over Mar-

jory. Partly vexation, partly shyness, partly a sudden hopelessness of success. Her ambition, thus embodied in words, by other lips, sounded absurdly daring. How would her poor venture seem, when tried in the unsparing balance of the critics?

"You are not offended?" said Hugh, as she continued silent.

"I don't know. I don't care that all the world should know my private affairs."

"Am I 'all the world?'"

"You are a man of the world. This, which I spoke of by mistake, concerns only Gerald and myself."

"Don't be afraid, I'm not given to gossip; and least of all could I gossip about you! I only wanted to say that, if I can ever be of use to you, in this or any other matter, I hope you will let me know."

"I should not dare to show my writing to you. I did so pity the authoress of that book in your last review! You see things in a jaundiced light."

"I hope you won't take me off in your story!"

"Don't talk about it any more, please!" cried Marjory, imploringly: "No doubt you think me ridiculously vain! but I should not

dare even to dream of success, if it were not for one hope."

"You make me curious again; but I will ask no more questions."

A sudden thought struck Marjory. Should she indeed succeed, in spite of all her ignorance and inexperience, of the many chances against her, might he not be forced to own that God does answer prayer?"

"I will tell you what I mean," she said, after a momentary hesitation. "I am praying for success, night and day."

"Is that your hope?" said Hugh, with a mingling of compassion and amusement: "If you choose to pray for the moon, then, I suppose you will expect to get it."

"I didn't tell you, to make you scoff, either at me or at sacred things," cried Marjory, pained: "But you won't understand,—not can't, but won't."

"You do me injustice," said Hugh: "I had no intention of 'scoffing.' It is only that I know what disappointment is, after months of hope — hope bordering on certainty; and I should not like you to know the same."

"It seems impossible, then, to you, that I could write well enough to succeed?"

"Not in the least," said Hugh, warmly: "On the contrary, from my knowledge of you, though I never had the honour of seeing your writings, I should think it very possible indeed that you might, in time, have great success. Only mind! it would be *in time.* If you are counting on success at once, it is a risk, to say the least. In publishing, the first steps are hard to achieve at all, and, when achieved, uncertain. Don't misunderstand me: I say this only that you may know the dark side as well as the bright one."

"Thank you, that is very kind," said Marjory: "But I knew it all before; and indeed my heart would sometimes sink altogether, if it were not for what I have told you. I do hope—I may say, I do believe, that my prayer will be heard."

"I prayed once," said Hugh. His face changed, became dark and gloomy again; a crowd of painful memories seemed to pass like a storm across his mind.—"Yes, I prayed, as you say you are doing, day and night, for something that was life or death to me, and the heavens were like stone to my prayer. I've given it up now."

"Perhaps what you asked was not God's will," said Marjory, gently; "God's will is best."

But, even as she spoke, a sudden quiver ran through her. Oh, what if that Will should run counter to the desire of her own heart! But it must, perforce, be the Creator's Will that the thing created should fulfil the purpose of its existence; and Gerald was a Heaven-made artist. Thus by a rapid process of reasoning, so often repeated that it had now become habitual, the momentary dread passed from her.

"Yes, yes,—those hackneyed phrases—I know them by heart," said Hugh, with something of his old fiery impatience. "'God's Will,' 'All for the best,' and so forth. They are easy enough to echo, and cost nothing: no effort, no struggle, no heart's blood, drawn by drops. You have heard them from childhood upward, and therefore you accept them as truths. It does not occur to you to question their foundation; I hope you will never be forced to do so."

"Forced?" said Marjory.

"Forced by some practical contradiction of them, turning upside down your life and all you had taken on trust in it. After that, you might not be so positive in asserting what you have not proved. I hope this will never happen to you. But I can tell you,

all you peaceable religious people, 'there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy.'"

"No doubt," said Marjory; "I feel it. Infinitely more. But nothing really, whatever in appearance, to shake our faith in God."

"Isn't there?" said Hugh, half to himself, still with that bitter smile.

"Nothing; nothing at all. I am certain. I would lay down my life for that certainty."

As she spoke, her eyes shone with that half-inspired light which kindled them at times—that light which had often strengthened Gerald. She looked like a young enthusiast, who would verily, as she had said, lay down her life for her faith.

"You put things in your own way," said Hugh, glancing at her with a kind of gloomy admiration: "You have just the same old stock of assertions as all other religionists; but they don't irritate me so much, from you."

"And why should they irritate you at all?" cried Marjory.

"For the reason I mentioned. Because most of those who utter them know nothing of the other side. You yourself know nothing of it. I don't suppose, though, that will make much difference in the end."

"Meanwhile, do you think it kind to try to shake my faith?"

"I am innocent of any such endeavour. I merely said what occurred to me, in answer to your remarks. That might not have been 'kind' exactly; but I don't know. Your faith may yet be shaken more roughly."

"Have you any faith at all, Mr. Vivian?"

"In the accepted notions of religion? Not much, I fear; and what I have is negative. For instance, I believe that the world did not come from 'a fortuitous concourse of atoms;' but exactly how, or why, it came, seems a mystery to me."

"What a miserable state to be in! I don't wonder you are unhappy."

"It is rather dreary, certainly," said Hugh, with a dreary smile.

"How did you get into it?"

"Ah! that would be a long story. I got into it through circumstances—the circumstances which formed my views on Providence, so horrifying to Miss Peele."

"And to me too."

"Yes, I see that. But I have had to toss about the world as best I could; and, if I had been sure of the other side, I would long ago have been out of it. There, I sup-

pose, was a bit of my negative faith: I never did dare to take the final plunge. But as to 'a kind Providence,'—any Being who cared one atom whether I fought through or perished like a dog; or worse, how many of my poor mother's nights and days might be consumed in anguish unutterable—I can't say I saw much sign of that."

"We are told that we must 'walk by faith, and not by sight,'" said Marjory.

"Oh, yes, I know all we are told. But meanwhile, unfortunately, we are blessed, or cursed, by the possession of brains and hearts—ingenious compounds of nerves and other capacities. If those could be suspended at will, 'walking by faith' might be another matter. But, as it is, when the heart compound has endured to a certain point, the brain compound cannot help beginning to reason; to wonder why this should be; if there be no way of stopping or alleviating; if an Almighty Power could not find a way; whether, if that Power be Almighty, it can be kind; if kind, Almighty: and so on to questions more complicated than any one who had not thought of them could imagine. And the end of all that is, one does not know what to believe; and one feels—at least

I feel—that the enigma of our existence remains yet to be solved. The Sphynx derides, if it does not devour, those hapless mortals who attempt to solve it."

"Do you ever read the Bible?" said Marjory.

"Not often now. I have read it."

"And how did it strike you?"

"I believe it is a collection of very remarkable books, written by various remarkable men—enthusiasts chiefly."

"Have you ever studied the evidences for their inspiration, and weighed both sides?"

"I can't say that I have," said Hugh, smiling.

"Would it not be worth the trouble to study them, praying all the time that, if there be a God," said Marjory, shuddering at her own words, "He will reveal the truth about them to you?"

"I am afraid of being duped. I have suffered so much. I have gone down into such depths—if there be a God, He forsook me. I am afraid of coming to a false conclusion, and having it all over again. I tell you, I did pray," he repeated, gloomily: "I did at least try to believe in prayer; and it was all of no use—and worse, because it misled me."

"I can't tell what to say to all that. I wish you would go to a clergyman."

"Heaven defend me! No, thank you, I'll fight out my own battles. You don't know half how bad or rebellious my spirit is, Miss Stanhope. I am beyond the help of any parson."

It did, indeed, seem that he was beyond help and hope. Marjory was silent. For the first time she realised man's impotence to reach his brother's soul.

"Don't vex yourself about me," said Hugh, in a softened tone, as, observing the pause, he looked at her, and saw the trouble in her face: "You are too kind to be happy, I fear, in this world. I'm sorry I've been such a fool as to talk so to you."

"I wish you could be happy!" said Marjory.

"Oh, I had settled down into a state endurable enough—stagnation, calm at any rate. I shall get back to it, I hope, some day. I'll confess that seeing you has unsettled me. Your face is so exactly the same; it has seemed to bring back old times, and made me think of all that might have been, and all I have lost—possibilities as well as realities. Never mind. I am like a spoiled

baby, crying for what can't be. I shall get over it soon."

He stopped abruptly, said "Good-bye," and turned back across the wintry fields.

Marjory went on alone, pondering. She could not fully understand his last words. Why, as he uttered them, had his dark eyes met hers with that strange, yearning, yet bitter look? She ought not to feel this attraction for him: it would surely be wrong to admit him, holding such views on the most sacred of all concerns, to any intimacy beyond mere acquaintance! And yet had he not already—by virtue of old times, she supposed—come to occupy in her heart and interests a place far closer than that?

Well, it would not do to analyse; she only became thereby more puzzled as to right or wrong. As to liking him, she could not help it; her pity for him amounted to a passion; and, so long as she continued that nightly prayer, how could she feel toward him as to a stranger? The Saviour Who ate and drank with publicans and sinners, would surely not condemn her for not altogether separating herself from this lost child of His, this prodigal son who had suffered so deeply.

And now he seemed bound up with that other object so near her heart—her work for Gerald. They were linked together now. She had seen that, but for his peculiar feelings towards her, his full powers of satire would have been brought to bear upon her presumptuous hopes. If success were granted to her, must he not be forced to confess what she owed to prayer? She remembered how of old the Israelites went forth, few and feeble, against mighty foes, and yet came home in triumph.

"In Thy Name, O Lord, we go forth against this multitude." Such was the feeling in her heart.

Later, as she sat alone in the bright little parlour, she thought over all the past year. How it had opened at Rockswold, in the usual monotony; Gerald far away in the north, only a dream as yet. She had regarded the outer world then as something in which she had no part: that one quiet corner was all she knew, except from books, of the great universe. Now she was here, in the swarming life of a city, surrounded by human beings and their relics; working, in the midst of workers. The star of her hope had risen; it was rising still. She looked no more for

unclouded happiness, even in Gerald; she had learnt of late that she must give up a good deal, suppress a good deal, if she would be to him, under present circumstances, half that she had desired. But the fortitude which had characterised her childhood was strong within her now; and she looked into the coming months through the halo of her purpose.

Was it not even possible that, when the new year closed, she might be with Gerald at Rome, in some quaint artist's lodgings, such as she read of? Among such inspiring associations, how well she could write, and how much better her writings would succeed, coming from Rome! Lina would be here, contentedly waiting till he could return to bear her off in triumph; and meanwhile, Marjory thought, with self-reproaching happiness, she would have him all to herself. It would be over—the uncongenial work, the hardship, the long waiting: only progress would be before him. Marjory sat in the window, alone, and without light save such as the myriad stars imparted, gazing on this blessed dream-land, and hearing the bells ring out the old year.

They were sad, no less than sweet, those

bells. They told not only of joy, but also of death and parting. But "things always turn out better than one expects," thought Marjory: and so the old year died out. The bells paused; the cathedral clock struck twelve with its deep note: then out clanged all the bells again,—and the new year was begun.

CHAPTER XVI.

"There is none like her, none.
And never yet so warmly ran my blood
And sweetly, on and on,
Calming itself to the long-wish'd for end,
Full to the bank, close on the promised good."

Tennyson.

And Gerald was with Lina. They were sitting over the dining-room fire, in the house at Albion Square, while here, as at the cathedral end, the bells filled the air with music. A midnight service was going on at St. Philip's; but Lina had a slight cold, which she would not run the risk of increasing, and therefore she remained at home. Punctilious regard to health was one of her points of conscience. She felt quite well, however, and graciously acceded to Gerald's request that she would see the old year out with him. So they sat by the warm fire, hand in hand. At least Gerald held her hand in a strong clasp, where she suffered it passively to lie. A beautiful and shapely hand it was: and always cool.

Gerald's heart and mind, like Marjory's,

were full of thoughts to-night. He sat long silent, looking into the ruddy coals, and clasping that hand which he loved.

"This next year will probably decide my fate," he said at last. His tone had a strange solemnity.

"Yes, if you find means to free yourself from the bank, you will be, this day year, with Mr. Harding. I quite expect it," said Lina, in a matter-of-fact manner.

"I hope it, inexpressibly," said Gerald; "but, if not, Lina—how then?"

"Is there any particular use in thinking of that before the time?" said Lina, cheerfully.

"How can one help it? Lina, I hope I have not been selfish."

"Selfish in what way?"

"In asking you to bind yourself to me. My whole heart was so full of you—perhaps I did not give due weight to the other side. I must not let you forget that, after all, it is only a chance. I may be obliged to decline Mr. Harding's offer, and go on here at the bank."

"You may. I am quite aware of that."

"But, in such a case, how would it be, Lina? Do you," he hesitated, and went on with

heightened colour—"do you love me enough to bear poverty with me? or should you give me up?"

What would Marjory have done in Lina's place, had she been Marjory still—only not his sister, but his lover? Would she not have thrown herself upon his neck, and cried:

"Better death than to give you up!"

But Lina pondered calmly, weighing the question; and finally replied:

"It would depend on circumstances."

The blood rushed up into Gerald's face; he was silent, still looking into the fire. He did not relinquish the unresponsive hand, but his hold on it relaxed. Then suddenly he clasped it tighter; the light returned to his eyes.

"She does not love me, yet, as I love her. But it will come," he thought:—"I will conquer her. I will make her love me."

"If only I am not selfish towards you," he repeated, aloud.

"Certainly not," said Lina, reassuringly; "I have told you the same before."

"The goodness of your heart makes you say so."

"Once for all, understand me, Gerald. I never allow my heart to conquer my reason.

And in this special matter I am quite old enough, and experienced enough, to judge for myself. I have weighed all the pros and cons. It is my belief, founded on observation, not on fancy, that a distinguished career is before you. We are both young; I have a comfortable home to wait in, and plenty of work to fill up the time. Eight-and-twenty is, in my opinion, quite soon enough to enter on the cares of married life."

"Eight-and-twenty!" said Gerald, laughing; "and you are just twenty-one. Seven years! Why, seven years seems an eternity. I shall have a home for you long before then, if I am to have one at all."

"Not so very long," said Lina, quite seriously; "I shall expect it to be five years, at the least, before we can prudently begin."

"Well, I am glad that you have made up your mind to the worst!" said Gerald, smothering a sigh: "It is being on the safe side at any rate. But, when I once get a start, I shall not be long in making my way. —Only—suppose I don't get a start, Lina!"

"We won't suppose anything of the sort," said Lina; and with this he was obliged to be satisfied.

"There is something I have not yet

fathomed in her," he thought; "I wonder if I shall ever attain to that sublime patience!" Then again he was long silent, still holding fast her hand; and the bells rang on.

"Perhaps a day will come," he said at length—some New Year's Eve like this, when I shall look back to this suspense as a dream that is gone, and you will be my wife: wholly my own for ever. I can hardly imagine such blessedness; or that I could feel it and live. Have you ever thought, Lina, what a wonderful thing joy is? I have borne a great deal of trouble; I don't know whether I could bear joy so well."

"It is better neither to allow oneself to be unduly elated or depressed. The middle path is the safest."

"Can you always govern yourself so?"

"Certainly, if I make an effort," replied Lina; "And I always do make the effort."

"I don't know," said Gerald, thoughtfully; "I doubt whether such matters depend upon effort entirely. You are of a high, serene nature, my darling; you are like an angel. The heights and depths of this lower life are alike beneath your atmosphere."

"It is not that. It was my father," said Lina—"who taught me to be reasonable and

well balanced. You could learn the same, if you would try."

"At least I may hope to grow less unlike you, when I am with you always. Meanwhile, you must not despise me—only bear with me; and some day I will try to make things up to you. Some day," he repeated, rising, and pacing the room. "If I win fame and glory, Lina,—and I may—yes, I may!—the chief joy will be to offer all to you. I dreamed last night that some one crowned me with a laurel-wreath, and I knelt at your feet, and laid it there, and left it."

"What a foolish dream!" said Lina, not ill pleased.

"Perhaps less foolish than you think. When I awoke, it seemed a prophecy."

"One is often not quite oneself on first awaking. You must not let yourself live for me, you know. You must work, not for me, but for duty."

"That is the joy! they will be blended," said Gerald: "My wife and my duty will be one. You will be, even more than now, my guiding-star. What may I not become!"

"Hark!" said Lina: "The bells have stopped; the hour is going to strike."

Then the twelve strokes which Marjory

heard alone, pealed more faintly on the ears of these two lovers. Not from the great cathedral only: all the clocks, on all the churches in the town, struck one after another. The last farewell of the dying year. Out clashed the bells again: they had sped the parting, they must welcome the coming, guest.

"A happy new year to you, Gerald," said Lina, rising. He came up to her, and suddenly clasped her in his arms.

"Let us begin it so," he said: "Close together:—my darling—my beloved!"

Lina permitted his embrace, passionate yet reverential. His gray eyes gazed at her as if he adored her; well satisfied, Lina noted their expression, which lighted all his face. It was the face of a poet, of a divinely inspired artist: of one whom the Gods love.

"You are too vehement, Gerald," she said; but her tone was sweet and gentle: "And now you must just wish mamma a happy new year, and go."

"Must I go?"

"Of course you must. Think of your work to-morrow! and I, too, am quite sleepy: and then mamma must not be kept up!"

So they went, Gerald reluctantly enough, to the drawing-room: where Mrs. Peele was slumbering on the sofa.

"Is it so late?" she cried, starting to her feet: "I have been thinking of old times."

"Dreaming of them, you mean, mamma," said Lina. Then Gerald wished her both in one a happy new year and a good night: and quietly took his leave.

But, an instant later, he reappeared in the doorway.

"Lina! one moment."

She went out to him in the dark passage: and found herself again in his arms.

"Do you know," he said, "suddenly the thought came to me, 'Where shall I be when another year begins?' and then I felt that I must wish you good night once more."

"Good night, you foolish boy," said Lina.

All the way through the streets, as he walked home, the bells were ringing, the stars were shining.

"I shall be at Rome, perhaps," he said to himself, answering that sudden question: "A thousand miles between us—and how I shall crave for her! But it will be paving

the way to have her always with me. I shall look at those same stars, and think of to-night.

So he returned to his lodgings, and found Marjory still up, waiting to wish him a happy new year.

CHAPTER XVII.

" Good name, in man and woman, dear my lord,
Is the immediate jewel of their souls :
Who steals my purse steals trash; 'tis something, nothing.
. . . .
But he that filches from me my good name
Robs me of that which . .
. . makes me poor indeed."
Shakespeare.

"I SHOULD have thought," said Marjory, "that you were superior to the gossip of the town."

"It is one thing to countenance gossip," said Lina, "and another to remain indifferent while the name of one's future sister-in-law is bandied about."

"But, after all, what have they said?" cried Marjory, indignant and excited : "Only just that—that——"

"That Mr. Vivian is paying you marked attention ; and that you do not repulse him. This, in my opinion, is equal to saying that you encourage him. In fact, he probably takes your manner for encouragement. Just hear me out, dear," as Marjory, crimson,

and on the verge of angry tears, was about to speak: "Do not excite yourself. I will tell you the facts of the case. It is remarked that Mr. Vivian, who, before you came, seldom went out at all, is now to be met wherever you are invited. If you are not present, he looks black, is barely civil, and takes the first opportunity to escape; if you do arrive, he brightens visibly, talks to no one else, and, in short, makes his feelings universally apparent. Mind! these are not my own words—I am repeating what I have heard, not from one alone, but from many. I should have mentioned it sooner, only I was afraid of putting notions into your head."

Why, despite the unpleasantness of forming a butt for the Alton gossips, did a sudden thrill of wild joy rush through Marjory's heart? If she guessed the reason, she did not own it, even to herself.

"Well, unless I altogether give up going out, Lina, I really don't know how I am to help Mr. Vivian's talking to me; and if people choose to interpret it *so*, I cannot help that, either. You confess the worst thing said of me, is that I do not repulse him?"

"Yes, I rejoice to say I have heard nothing worse. You are popular, fortunately; and therefore you have not been accused of flirting."

"That is not the only reason," cried Marjory, warmly: "I have not flirted with him, or with any one; and so I could not be accused of it."

"When you have more knowledge of the world, dear Marjory, you will see that persons are sometimes accused unjustly. I am warning you only as a true friend. Lookers-on, you know, see most of the game. If there were no other objection to Mr. Vivian, he is much too poor to marry; and I don't suppose that he has any prospect — like Gerald—of increasing his income."

"Lina, do stop! I hate it. I hate to imagine and speculate on such objects. Why will you go on in this way?"

"Because I think it is time that you should decide in your own mind what attitude you ought to adopt towards Mr. Vivian. I do not say 'wish'—but 'ought.'"

"Oh, dear!" cried Marjory, with a hunted feeling: "I wish to adopt no attitude towards anyone. I wish to be free, as I feel at the moment; and to take people as they

are. I don't consider all my conduct beforehand, as if I were acting a part."

"It might be better, if you did. In this at least, I will try to make you consider. I am really seriously afraid, Marjory, of some entanglement between you and Mr. Vivian. You are little more, in many ways, than an inexperienced child; and I regard myself at present in the light of your elder sister. I shall stand by you as long as I can."

"I would rather stand alone," said Marjory, proudly.

"Very probably; but that is not desirable. To save you from what might end in lifelong repentance, I will tell you what I have never before told anyone—even Gerald. It seems that only facts will convince you."

The girls were walking towards a suburb of the city—an uninteresting walk enough; but Lina had business with a dressmaker in this quarter, and had called in the College Yard on her way to request Marjory's company. It was eleven o'clock on a frosty morning; Gerald was at the bank: Lina, in making the request, had announced that she had something to say. Marjory's heart began to beat with passionate quickness. What was she about to hear? Was it anything

that must separate her altogether from—but she must steel herself, and listen.

"You have heard of my brother Richard," said Lina, after a momentary pause, paler than usual, her head very erect, a proud determination on her features: "Your affection for Gerald has often reminded me of mine for him. In looks I have heard him compared to the Apollo Belvidere; he was like an old Grecian statue—tall, finely formed, a beautiful face. He was exceedingly clever, too; but unfortunately he could not make up his mind in the choice of a profession. After he left Oxford, he was at home for some time, helping my father in the bank, but otherwise in a state of indecision."

Be it observed that Mr. Richard Peele was probably not the only person, born to earn his bread, who has found it difficult to decide how to combine a maximum of enjoyment with a minimum of work!

"He was much older than you, was he not?" asked Marjory.

"Nine years. You will imagine how I looked up to him; and my father, no less than I, thought him perfect. It was a blow when he resolved to go to Australia; but he had a fancy for travelling, and my father

hoped that he would return some day, with sufficient capital to settle down comfortably at home. So we made all preparations for his going, and—it will be six years ago, next April—he bade us good-bye, and sailed, as we believed, from Gravesend."

"What a trial it must have been!"

"It was, indeed. We little knew that worse was to follow. The month before, Mr. Vivian had left Bullingham. His mother had died in February, and he went in March: disappeared, as I told you."

"But what had that to do with your brother?"

"Wait a little while! There was a certain Mr. Bulkley, a large shareholder in our bank——"

"Mr. Bulkley! I saw him at Thorne. Poor Jessie was with his sister."

"Yes. He was exceedingly rich; and almost equally careless in money matters. I often heard my father complain of his unbusiness-like habits, and say that he might be robbed three times over, and not discover it till too late. The clerks were all aware of this; it was a proverb among them. No one can tell what harm such a person may do!"

"Mr. Bulkley would never do intentional harm, I am quite sure. He was the kindest, most generous old man."

"Too generous: lavish, I should imagine," said Lina, coldly. "Well, a fortnight or so before Richard left us, Mr. Bulkley had been suddenly summoned to his brother—another oddity, like himself, from all accounts—who lived at St. Petersburg. He was detained some months in Russia; first through his brother's lingering illness, and then to wind up affairs after his death; and all that time, I suppose, he never looked at his banking-accounts, although they were forwarded to him regularly. If only he had found out the —the—mistake, as he should have done, at once, how much misery might have been spared!"

"What mistake was it?"

"One day in the August of that year, Mr. Bulkley called upon my father. They were closeted together for a very long time. It was in my holidays; papa and I were just starting for a walk, when this interrupted us. I shall never forget my father's face, as he came away from that interview. There had been a robbery—" Lina paused for one moment; afterwards her tones seemed more

distinct, as though she were forcing them to calmness. "Several forged cheques had been presented at the bank in Mr. Bulkley's name. Some were for small, and some for large, amounts; the whole affair had been most artfully contrived. The total sum came to seven or eight hundred pounds."

"How annoying for your father!"

"The whole business seems indelibly branded on my mind. I shall never forget what we felt concerning it, he and I. He had always been unimpeachable as a manager; everyone had depended on him, had looked up to him. The bank directors honoured him inexpressibly; there had never been a blot, not on his name only, but on his business capacities. And now for this to happen! He was most anxious that the matter should be thoroughly sifted; and it was placed in the hands of detectives. The forgeries were traced to—Richard."

Lina's voice did not tremble, her resolution did not flinch, as these words were uttered; but no one looking upon her could doubt how terrible such utterance was to her. A momentary spasm contracted her features; her colour had faded; her lips were pale; but she held up her head, like a queen defying the world.

"Yes, it was proved," she went on, steadily, looking straight before her: "We would not believe it at first; but it was said to be proved beyond a doubt. I did not understand the details; and now I cannot recall them; but even we were obliged to confess that there was every cause for suspicion. You have no lack of imagination, Marjory; I need not try to describe what this was to us."

"Something beyond words," said Marjory, whose heart ached in sympathy.

"My father was always just and honourable; it was his death-blow, but he made no resistance; he placed both Richard and himself in Mr. Bulkley's hands. Mr. Bulkley, however, remembered all his services, and would not lay on him unnecessary shame. He did his utmost to hush up the affair, refusing to prosecute; I need not say that my father insisted on refunding the full amount. There, as concerned the outside world, the matter ended. Mr. Bulkley was as cordial as ever, and made a point of being peculiarly civil to my father."

"Just like Mr. Bulkley—like my remembrance of him, I mean: so noble and generous!" cried Marjory.

"But sadly lax. He was so easy, I believe he felt it no effort to pass things over. My father had written instantly to Richard; and we could not help hoping that he might be able to clear himself—if not to the world's satisfaction, at least to ours. We felt, as I feel still, that the circumstances were not fully known to us. But they may be discovered yet."

The peculiarity of Lina's tone, as these words were spoken, struck Marjory with a vague apprehension.

"What do you mean?" she asked.

"My father was firmly of opiniòn that Richard was not the only one concerned in the forgeries. Indeed, knowing him as I did, I often think that his share may have been infinitesimal, compared to that of another person. We cannot tell how his kindness may have been wrought upon; or perhaps, even, the supposed proofs of his guilt were raised on a false foundation. My father's justice was so uniform that, even in behalf of his own son, he would not have imputed blame to any one, without good cause. Marjory, the person whom he suspected, was Mr. Vivian."

"Lina!"

"I knew you would look horrified, but you must listen a little longer. We were all in such grief, that I was allowed to remain at home for one quarter, instead of returning to school. Poor mamma is not much of a companion, you know; and I was my father's confidante. We went long walks together, when he told me much that he uttered to no other being. He spoke continually of Richard, and the disgrace; his mind was full of it; but he looked forward with increasing hope to Richard's reply to his letter. He felt, he said, sure that it would bring us comfort; perhaps Richard might even return, and clear himself in person. My father had begged him to spare no one from false generosity, saying that truth, for all parties, was best. Always, after talking about this, I observed that his mind would turn to Mr. Vivian. He would wish again and again that he could obtain some clue to his whereabouts. His extreme dislike, and even contempt, for him were evident. One day I inquired their cause."

"What did he say?"

"He said, most emphatically, that he had solid reason to distrust the young man, and to think badly of his general character. Also

that, months before, he would have been publicly exposed, but for a weak leniency on Mr. Bulkley's part. Papa could not tell me the facts of that case, having promised Mr. Bulkley—which he now regretted—to conceal them; but he felt that they fully justified his present suspicion, which was heightened by Mr. Vivian's disappearance."

"Some day I will ask him where he was at that time," said Marjory.

"No doubt he would give some plausible account of himself; but that would prove nothing. Well, to go on: by Christmas time we had begun to expect Richard's letter. We had heard of the safe arrival of the ship; but no letter came. My father was almost ill from anxiety. He went steadily on about his work, hiding all he felt, lest it should increase the harsh judgments on Richard. At length we heard that an Australian mail was lost; and this lightened the load a little. Then I went back to school."

"It must have been a terrible time."

"It was, indeed! A fever broke out at school, early in the spring, and we were all sent home. One day, about a week later, I was reading in my father's study, when the afternoon postman went by. Some minutes

later the hall-door opened; I heard papa come in. He paused outside the study, fumbling at the lock. I jumped up to open it, and he entered, and crossed the room to the mantelpiece. His face was flushed, and strangely altered, drawn down on one side. He rested his elbows upon the mantelpiece, his head upon his hands, and said, without looking at me :—

" 'Lina, I have heard from Richard; his letter has been sent to me; he is dead—at Capetown. The letter tells me all—I consider it all owing to Vivian.'

" He said this, Marjory, in a thick, confused tone, and then fell down unconscious. It was paralysis; he was carried to his bed, and never rose again."

" Was he ill long ? " said Marjory, softly.

" Ten days. He was never quite himself; but he talked a good deal, and often very connectedly. As I sat all day by his bed, I heard much that I have treasured in my mind. Again and again he would say such things as these :—'I knew it—I warned Bulkley; I told him it would be a bad precedent—exposure was his duty.' Then, 'I felt sure it was Vivian's fault—Vivian's fault—he ought never to have come into the

bank.' Or sometimes, 'Never mind, it shall be known, Richard; they shall hear your excuse. It was a strong temptation.' That particularly, I often observed: 'It was a strong temptation.'

"Once he was so coherent that I asked him one or two questions; but he only looked at me, and said: 'It was as I suspected, Lina —that affair of Vivian's'—He never finished the sentence."

"But had he really heard from your brother?"

"Undoubtedly; but one of our chief trials was that we never found the letter. He was not sufficiently himself to tell us where he left it. I think now that it must have been accidentally burnt, since he was standing close to the fire."

"Then you could not even know how it was that your brother died at Capetown?"

"Yes. Enclosed in the envelope, which we found upon the study floor, was a note from a Capetown clergyman to my father, breaking the news of Richard's death. It said that he had been put ashore, from a French trading-ship, two or three months previously, ill of fever; that he had lain in hospital ever since; that the fever was followed by

rapid decline, of which, in January, he died. At first he had been most uncommunicative, and had not given his true name; but a fortnight before his death his state of mind had changed; he had seemed overwhelmed with grief, the cause of which he would not disclose; and had written by degrees the letter to my father, which the chaplain had sealed in his presence,—although, by his own request, it was not posted till after his funeral. How he came to be on board a French trading vessel, instead of, as we supposed, in Australia; or what had become of his outfit and other possessions, we had no idea. The chaplain mentioned nothing as belonging to him. You may imagine how earnestly we searched for the letter, and what a bitter disappointment its loss was to us. In a few days my father had another stroke: after which he spoke no more.

"Did you write to the Capetown chaplain?"

"Mamma wrote, begging for more particulars. My married sisters and I saw that she asked all we desired. We had a very kind note in reply; but he could tell us nothing further. Richard had not spoken to anyone of his private affairs. It was evident,

the chaplain said, that he had much on his mind, but he would answer no questions. About the same time my father's letter to Australia was returned from the Dead Letter Office."

"I cannot bear to think of such dreadful sorrow."

"Yet in some ways I now feel thankful for it. My experiences of those months did much to strengthen and mature my character. I learned to stand alone, to command myself in trouble; for, during the whole time, we had to show a brave front to the world. Everyone, of course, had heard reports about Richard; we did our best to silence them by our manner and conduct; and in this way many came to conclude that they had no real foundation. I longed from the first to leave Bullingham, and mamma would have gone when my father died; but I persuaded her that it was best to stay till we had lived down the storm."

"And you were only sixteen?" exclaimed Marjory.

"I was always old of my age; and constant intercourse with papa had given me more wisdom than is usual. Before we came here, the affair had ceased to be mentioned. But,

Marjory, it has all made, as I said, an indelible impression on me. The disgrace was the worst part. It was hard to lose my father; but his life had been blameless; he died respected by all, and I knew that he was at rest. Besides, the loss of parents is in the nature of things; the blow must have fallen some time, if not then. And again, Richard's death alone would have been a great sorrow; but we should have got over it, as people do get over bereavements. But the disgrace! that was beyond bereavement. The blot on our stainless name."

She paused. In that face, usually so passionless, the stab of wounded pride was plain.

"It had been our glory that 'a black sheep,' so called, had never been known among the Peeles. We could not boast, like you and Gerald, of high ancestry. We were always a middle-class family, and aspired to nothing more. Our respectability was our escutcheon; and that had been unimpeached. Marjory, it was the disgrace which killed my father, and which sank so deeply into me. And I have always felt, as I told you, that part of it, if not all, might be wiped off, could we know the whole truth. If ever an oppor-

tunity should come, Marjory, you may be sure that Mr. Vivian will not be spared at Richard's cost."

Hard, frigid, fixed in resentment—was this the face of Gerald's angel, thought Marjory?

"And lately—I will tell you all, while I am about it—I have thought that I might find a clue. Jessie Bellhouse disappeared from Ripley a little while after Mr. Vivian left Bullingham. It is evident that he knows—or knew—something, painful to himself, concerning her. In Bullingham he was penniless; he and his mother lived in the poorest way, in inferior lodgings; how could he afford to throw up his appointment, and go—no one knew where? We don't know how he may have tempted poor Richard, to secure his own ends; or, on the other hand, how craftily he may have contrived that the blame should be thrown on one who, when discovery came, would not be on the spot to defend himself. I repeat, Marjory, that I owe it to my own name, my father's name, Richard's name, not to spare Mr. Vivian, if my suspicions should ever be proved true."

She ceased; and, finding Marjory still silent, added proudly:

"That is all. Only remember, I have warned you to be careful how you are drawn into increased intimacy with a bad man."

"Lina," said Marjory, gently, after a lengthened pause, "it pains me more than I can tell, to think of all you have suffered. But yet it cannot be right deliberately to condemn Mr. Vivian when there is really no proof that he was at all concerned in the affair."

"There we differ. My father's word is proof to me."

"But it does not seem clear what your father meant. That is a mystery. I think we ought to be content so to leave it."

"We shall never agree upon this subject," said Lina; "It may as well be dropped."

"Have you told Gerald?"

"All this? Certainly not. I have only told you from a sense of duty."

"May I tell him?" asked Marjory.

"You may do as you like. To me the subject is too painful to be gone all over again; and perhaps it is fit that he should know the blot on our name."

"Oh, Lina! don't say that. Your name is stainless."

"No," said Lina, firmly and proudly;

"Not at present. It was stainless; and it may be so again. But that time is to come."

Then, with an ease simply inexplicable to Marjory, she passed to other subjects.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"A growing fear possesses me,
An anxious thought distresses me!—
'Tis but a look, a tone, an air,
And yet I wonder what is there!—
Is it a cloud that's creeping up!
A dash of bitter in the cup?

* * * *

Yet if I ask me what? or why?
No ready words give quick reply."

John Jerningham's Journal.

As for Marjory, she was miserable, sorely perplexed—indignant, yet afraid.

"If I could know," she cried; "if I could know the truth! I may be deceived in him; and yet, I cannot believe it."

She was in her room alone as these words broke from her; but solitary musing brought to her no relief. She mistrusted her own judgment, and felt that she could not rest till she had talked all over with Gerald. On Gerald's opinion she would rely. He would be at least equally partial to Lina's side of the question as to that of Hugh Vivian; and yet he would not be unjust.

That very evening the opportunity came. Lina was gone out to dinner; and Gerald, being not in a mood for work, settled down with a book in the cheerful sitting-room. Marjory established herself in her favourite place at his feet, and poured out the whole story.

He listened with deep interest: that interest, full of sympathy and of intelligence, yet silent, which was peculiar to Gerald. At the end followed a pause of some moments, during which he sat deep in thought. At length he said,—

"How she has suffered! Oh, that I could make it all up to her!"

"You think only of Lina, Gerald."

"Who could help it?" said Gerald, colouring. "No one who knew her could doubt what an awful blow this must have been to her, especially when she had all but adored that brother."

"You think, then, from the circumstances, there could be no doubt of his guilt?"

"None whatever, it seems to me. You say it was hunted out by detectives; and then—his pretending to go to Australia, and the rest."—"My poor darling!" he was adding in his heart.

"But what do you think of the part about Mr. Vivian?"

"Vivian! That must be a mistake. If there had been any evidence against him, the detectives would have scented it, and Mr. Peele would certainly not have hesitated to expose him."

"Then why should Mr. Peele talk of him as if he must have been mixed up in it?"

"I pity Mr. Peele more than I can express. No doubt it was natural that he should catch at any straw to excuse his son."

"And you think that was all?"

"Anything real must have been discovered. Mr. Peele seems to have had—or fancied he had—some previous cause to distrust Vivian; but that proves nothing."

"I wonder what that cause could have been?"

"Something connected with Mr. Bulkley's affairs, I imagine, from what you tell me; no concern of ours, at any rate, and long gone by. If Mr. Peele were alive now, he would no doubt confess that he had been wrong in indulging such a suspicion, and still more so in talking of it, though only to Lina. But he must have been ill and harassed, and his nerves unhinged by the blow."

"I wish you would say this to Lina."

"Why should she be reminded of all those details? I shall try to help her to forget the whole business."

"Yes, if she only will. But she is relying even now on those suspicions of her father's, and hoping that some day she may succeed in transferring the guilt to Mr. Vivian."

"You put it in too hard a way, Marjory," said Gerald, warmly; "you mean, she cannot help hoping that her brother's memory may yet be cleared."

"Cleared at Mr. Vivian's expense," persisted Marjory; "that is her idea."

"Well, it is natural that she should respect her father's opinion. In any ordinary case, his opinion was no doubt of great value."

"But, you think, not in this?"

"In this, at least, we have one rule: England holds every man innocent till he is proved to be guilty."

"That is just what I feel, Gerald; only—it makes me nervous to remember what Mr. Peele said after reading Richard's letter."

"Of course, it is now impossible to know his exact meaning. But when he said that, he was on the point of paralysis; we should be very wrong to accuse Vivian, or any

one else, even in thought, on no better ground."

"That is really your opinion?"

"It seems to me the only opinion possible to any impartial person."

"I wish Lina would think so," cried Marjory.

"She will, in time. In such deep natures, wounds strike deep; and then consider her faith in her father! I have often thought how beautiful that is."

"I should hardly call it beautiful in this case."

Gerald looked hurt.

"You are not like yourself to-night," he said, with a vexed frown.

"Dear Gerald, don't be angry—I will confess the truth—I think Lina is unjust to Mr. Vivian. It is Mr. Vivian I am thinking of; I can't help liking him: you know I have liked him for years and years. Whatever his faults may be, I have felt sure that he was kind and true—a noble character wrecked by trouble, but perhaps yet to come safe to shore. But if he were what Lina thinks him, he would be neither kind, nor true, nor noble,—but a coward, mean, and cruel—to speak plainly, a blackguard alto-

gether. Lina believes all this of him; and she wishes me to believe it: and I—I—cannot."

Her voice broke off on a sudden; but Gerald could not see her face.

"I don't know why you should vex yourself," he said, kindly. "If she be mistaken, as I cannot but think, she will some day be the first to own it."

"And meanwhile?" said Marjory, anxiously.

"Meanwhile, you must agree to differ."

Marjory was silent. How could she make Gerald understand the magnitude of that difference? She sat for a long time speechless, gazing into the fire. The red coals burned; the clock ticked; Gerald had gone off into a dream.

"Gerald," she said at last, "I wonder——"

"Well?"

"I wonder if you really know Lina?"

"I have known her better every day since our engagement," he said, with a sudden glow; "And the more I know, the more admirable she seems to me, and the less worthy I feel myself of her."

A chill passed through Marjory's spirit—the chill of separation, of a gulf beginning

to widen between herself and Gerald. She must not speak out all her mind to him. She dared not—would not if she dared.

"Well!" said she, with a forced laugh; "I am glad, at any rate, that you don't think it my duty to cut Mr. Vivian."

"To me it seems much more your duty to forget those suspicions, and thank God that you have not to battle with them, as my poor Lina must. They are a temptation, to be resisted."

"You speak as though even to you it were a temptation to hope he might be guilty!"

Gerald paused: then, very quietly and gravely—"It might become one in time," he said, "if I dwelt upon it, in my longing to clear her brother. But in that case my eyes would be blinded, and I should not see facts as they are. Now, let us try to put this subject altogether out of our minds."

As he spoke, he turned resolutely to his book. Marjory went to the piano, and began to play snatches of airs, stray chords, remnants of songs, just as they came to her. Only music suited her present mood; she could not settle to any occupation.

Every one was against him, she thought: every one except herself—even Gerald. That

which he called a temptation, which to Lina seemed a duty, which to herself was simply horrible—for Gerald it had attractions! It was evident that he would be glad if the dead man's guilt could be found to appertain to Hugh Vivian. He was nothing to any of them; nothing, it appeared, to any one in the world—only to her.

As she listened to the wild sounds which rang from beneath her fingers, it seemed to her that life also is a medley of disconnected notes, of discords that should be harmonies, of melodies separately full of beauty, but hateful in their clash. She had heard, as from afar, of life's conflict; she began to realize it now.

But gradually, as she grew calmer, she felt comforted by Gerald's judgment, and all the more from its variance with his feelings. It would apply equally, she felt assured, to those other suspicions touching Jessie, which she could not bring herself to breathe to him, but which had still, at times, a nightmare power to trouble her. He would dismiss them, as he dismissed the rest; and her determination to despise them would be strengthened.

Thus, as before, she fortified her faith in accordance with her desires ; and awoke from a night of youthful sleep, resolved to make no change in her intercourse with Mr. Vivian.

CHAPTER XIX.

"Out of the mist into sunlight,
I have sent a white-winged shaft;
Out from the shore on the ocean,
I have launched a tiny raft."—*Edith Floyer.*

Lina said nothing more on the obnoxious subject; and Marjory carefully abstained from mentioning Hugh's name in her presence. The holidays came to an end; the little boys returned; and the mill of work went on busily as ever. In these days work was Marjory's life; she was almost unnaturally active. Her story was approaching its close; her characters were continually with her; she saw their faces, heard their voices, felt an intimate acquaintance with them and their concerns. Meanwhile, the winter merged into spring; the air was gradually milder; the elms in the College Green began to sprout; the grass grew, and brightened into green, in the meadows beyond the river.

Marjory fancied, when she had leisure to observe them, that Gerald's spirits were less even than they used to be. He was not so

much with Lina, more frequently shut up in his attic: often he lost himself in fits of dreamy thought—not happy fits, judging from his countenance. It might be, Marjory fancied, that he was anxious about her book: the supposition doubled her energies.

She seldom now spent an evening from home; her evenings were too precious! Some invitations, however, she was obliged to accept; and sometimes she still met Hugh Vivian. But whether the reports mentioned by Lina had reached his own ear, or for any other reason, he no longer sought opportunity for *tête-à-tête* conversation. She might, indeed, have feared that she had offended him unawares, and she would certainly have concluded that he felt for her no peculiar liking;—but that at times, looking up suddenly, she met his dark eyes fixed on her from some lonely corner, with an expression which, though she did not fathom it, quickened her heart, and sent the colour in a flame to her cheeks. He always looked away when their eyes met; that gaze was clearly involuntary, and not intended to attract her attention. But she could not help thinking of it afterwards, when she was alone at home; and then she would see it again, and again

would come the quick thrill and the rush of colour. She did not know how much of piquancy that recollection added to her daily toil.

One evening, early in March, when the wind was howling round the cathedral, making strange wails and moans through the arches and in the cranks of the ancient doors, driving wild gusts of rain against the windows, Gerald, painting alone, heard Marjory's steps fly up the attic stairs, — she burst in upon him, a large roll of foolscap in her hand, crying:

"Gerald, Gerald! it is finished."

"Your story?"

"I have this moment written the last line. Can you listen? I must just read the end."

She sat down on an old box, as she spoke, and began forthwith. In this final chapter, she had felt "the spirit" strong upon her; and with her joy mingled a pardonable pride, as she saw the impression produced on Gerald. He had laid down his brush, and was seated on an opposite box to her own. As she finished, her eyes wandering from the page to his face, he exclaimed:—

"Marjory, it is beautiful!"

"O Gerald! that repays me for all."

"And now comes the tug of war! I wonder when our fate will be decided."

"I must correct and copy the whole, you know, before I send it off. But that work will only be mechanical."

"I do, indeed, hope for success now. Yes, that last part is really beautiful. Just let me see it."

He took the manuscript, became interested, and pored over it for half an hour, while Marjory, tired out, rested on her oars. That half-hour seemed but five minutes to her, in its multitude of glad visions. The wind raged, and the rain beat; in the intervals, the river, swelled by recent floods, flowed with a rushing sound. But Marjory heeded nothing of all this. It was as though Eden had dawned again in this dusty attic.

For a month from that day she worked harder than ever, perfecting her task. Towards the end she was visibly thinner and paler; and Gerald had often to compel her to rest. But always at night she slept the sweet sleep of girlhood, awaking refreshed; and by day she was constantly saying in her heart:

"God helps those who help themselves."

So, at the month's end, the book was ready.

It was on a soft spring afternoon that she set forth, with her own hands to post the manuscript. Her publisher had been long chosen—one whom, from literary biographies, she knew to be merciful to young authors, quick to encourage all that seemed worth encouraging. A short note, requesting his consideration, had been speedily written; she walked swiftly through the busy High Street, for once seeing, without observing, the conflicting streams of men, women, children, each with an individual history, a separate purpose in life. As she passed among them, the names of great masters, whom Gerald aspired to follow, were ringing in her ears; before her eyes was "the eternal city," with its halo of fame, and Gerald working in the studio they had dreamed of.

Still thus absorbed, she reached the post-office, and went mechanically through the commonplace matters of weighing and stamping. Then, with reluctance, she had to leave her precious burden to the tender mercies of a clerk—since it was too bulky for ordinary postage.

"You will be sure that it goes?" she said.

"All right, Miss," said the clerk, transferring his attention to another customer. Marjory gave one more anxious glance, and, with lingering step, passed back into the street. Some one followed her. Looking up, half startled, she intercepted an amused twinkle in two dark eyes.

"So the great undertaking is launched!" said Hugh Vivian, shaking hands.

"Mr. Vivian, you are very impertinent."

"You must forgive me,—I couldn't resist it! I have been intensely interested for the last five minutes."

"I hope he won't forget to post it," said Marjory, still thinking of the clerk.

"I hope he won't be tempted to look into it!" returned Mr. Vivian: "There would be no saying what he might not forget, under such fascination."

"I wish I could think it were half so taking! However, if it will only sell, fascination may go to the winds."

"If I could secure a sale, it would sell by wildfire. But you have scorned even such small aid as I might have given!"

"I dare say that, so far from aiding, you will hinder it some day, by cutting it up in a review."

"Now that is too bad, Miss Stanhope. More probably it will cut up me! I shall look out in it for a sinful quarter-master, who had known better days."

"I would rather not talk about the book, even in fun," said Marjory; "I cannot tell you what anxiety, hope, and fear, are mixed up with every thought of it. I dare not realise all that depends on it! that frightens me too much."

She looked up with something of entreaty, as she spoke; and Mr. Vivian's expression changed.

"Well! I wish it all success. I cannot say more. If I had your belief in prayer, I would join you in praying."

He pitied the wistful young face, which told the old tale of the battle with the world —so often apparently a losing battle. He felt a sort of anger, of despair, that such earnest spirits should be left, as it were, to their fate, to suffer with the guilty.

"Perhaps you will believe in it some day," said Marjory, looking full at him, and smiling. He thought that it was almost a heavenly smile; it seemed to rest his wearied heart. The wistfulness had faded; in its place was a radiance not of earth. With that smile she

left him, saying a hasty "Good-bye," as her rapid young feet sped away. He stood still, and watched till she was out of sight; and there was something almost of adoration in his eyes.

Marjory went straight on to the cathedral. The nave was empty. She knelt down where she could see that crowned figure who had conquered, that other figure with face upturned from his book. "Help me! help me, O God!—and glorify Thyself!" she cried in a passion of supplication. Gerald, and all he prized on earth—Hugh Vivian, and all he might yet gain in Heaven—herself, her aims, her longings, were bound all together in that prayer. All in His Hands! the Hands of the Great Ruler, Who has said that He will grant the prayer of faith. The spirits of men as reeds under His control—He could bless her labours, He could guide that publisher's judgment. She asked no miracle: other works, far inferior, had been accepted, sold, had earned that precious money which she could gain by no other means.

She had never prayed so earnestly before; she felt sure that God would hear her. Peace was in her heart when, an hour later, she rose at length, and went home. Yes, without doubt, she must be heard.

In the course of a few days, arrived a formal note, acknowledging the receipt of her manuscript. That the final decision should be delayed, was a relief; she waited willingly, and rested. The Easter holidays, suspending lessons for a fortnight, came at the nick of time. Marjory quickly recovered the strength impaired by her month's hard labour; and Mrs. Myers ceased to remark, in dismay, that Miss Stanhope was growing thin.

CHAPTER XX.

"What a day it was that day!
Hills and vales did openly
Seem to heave and throb away
At the sight of the great sky:
And the silence, as it stood
In the glory's golden flood,
Audibly did bud and bud."

Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

During this period, as if to reward her spell of toil, came a day, ever remembered by Marjory as a halcyon day—though in after times much saddened the recollection. The brother and sister had long looked forward to spending the Bank Holiday, Easter Monday, upon the Shelburn Hills; an anticipation only clouded by possibilities of cold or wet. But nature favoured them. No cold or wet marred this day: it was the perfection of a day in spring—warm, but without oppression, the atmosphere a joy to all living things. The sky was one expanse of blue—blue soft and serene—as if unfolding a warm heart above its new-born world. Gerald and Marjory met Lina at the station, each armed

with various materials for employment. Lina had a roll of lace work, designed for sale in behalf of St. Philip's; Gerald, his sketching tools, also sandwiches and similar provision for the outer man, in his knapsack: Marjory had Carlyle's "Heroes," Palgrave's "Golden Treasury," and a little MS. book in which to dot down any ideas suggested by the hills.

The railway journey was short—too short for Marjory. She sat in a corner of the carriage, absorbed in the landscape, meadows of fresh young grass, and hedges renewed in bloom, little lambs frisking beside their mothers, trees, oak and ash only in bud as yet, the rest clad in spring's exquisite green —cottages, scantily sprinkled, with gardens beginning to be gay, and orchards all in blossom. Marjory was sorry when, after some minor stoppages, the train steamed into the Shelburn station. The platforms were crowded with excursionists; the trio threaded their way through a loud-voiced and elbowing multitude, passed a throng engaged in clamorous bargains with cabs and omnibuses; and went quietly on towards the hills.

There, beyond the straggling houses and

climbing terraces of Shelburn, the hills rose, grand and still. Changeless, above the world —to look at them raised the heart. The air, too, was not like other air; it was life-giving, full of vigour. All the three felt ready for a walk of fifty miles, as they started from the station! It was one continuous ascent: first a road, bordered by villa-like houses, with gardens, conservatories, and a general bright air of well-being; then the town, with its fashionable shops—not one shabby or dingy among them; then bonâ fide hills, where the party were beset by donkey-boys, vendors of local photographs, and the like; then, leaving all these, a narrow sheep-path, winding into loneliness and silence.

Here they scrambled on, the way at times so steep, that all attention was absorbed in maintaining a footing, until at length they reached a spot where was no sight or sound of man—only a stray sheep grazing peacefully, looking up as they approached, and moving a step or two, then pausing to graze again. A knoll of heathery moss formed a tempting resting-place, where, by mutual consent, they sat down. The mountain air made them thankful for the luncheon which kind little Mrs. Peele had provided. The

limits of Gerald's knapsack alone had restrained her generous contrivance; and, as it was, Marjory exclaimed that this repository must have changed into Fortunatus' bag, as its stores were unpacked and spread upon the grass.

It was a merry meal. Marjory chatted wildly, in excitement and delight; even Lina made one or two quiet jokes; and to Gerald all was elysium. Hunger and thirst appeased, Lina took out her lace, and, leaning back against the green hillside, applied herself to her task. Gerald, full-length on the turf beside her, rested his tired young limbs, free for a while from cramping desk-work; gazing sometimes at her deft fingers, as the needle sped to and fro, sometimes away, to the surrounding loveliness. Marjory sat on his other side, drinking in all the fair sounds and sights. The grass was very short and soft; wild bees hummed over the thyme; the silent hill rose behind, and sloped below; in a narrow valley, far beneath, a wild brook babbled over rough stones. Beyond it a sterner hill towered, craggy and steep, a mass of gray rock jutting at intervals from the green, a coppice of young firs slanting towards its base. Beyond, again, were other

hills—all around were hills, wonderful in repose. What was it to them that "the busy world, a thousand ways," hurried below? Their business was not to hurry, but to be still, taking counsel of no man, fearing no man. Between came visions of the surrounding plain; very fair, like the plain that tempted Lot; rich in meadow-land, in flocks and herds, in orchards, in wood and water. Amid these the tower of Alton Cathedral rose afar, conspicuous in a small cluster of spires and chimneys. Smaller towns were dotted here and there in the blue panorama; and villages, with farm ricks, and curling smoke rising like threads into the air. Marjory, as she gazed, saw ever more and more —etherealized, as objects in a dream.

"I can understand," she said, musingly, "the feelings of the old monks who shut themselves in on some mountain, alone with nature. One almost forgets, up here, that one is in the world."

"And worldly cares seem trifles," said Gerald. "Why do we feel in our element, I wonder, in peace and beauty like this,—and yet have to wrestle our way down yonder among smoke and sordidness?"

"All is rightly ordered," said Lina, sen-

tentiously. "These things are meant to rest us, not to live in."

"And the world is too full of work for one to stay here long, contentedly," said Marjory; "Only I meant that I could understand the old idea, selfish perhaps, of such height and solitude being best for one's own soul."

"One would soon lose all ideas in it," said Lina.

"Oh, no—no!" cried Gerald; "Ideas would grow here. In this stillness, one could think."

"And what would there be to think about?" said Lina. "We could hardly think of this hill, for instance, or the sky, or the plain there, for ever!"

"It would certainly be some test as to how far our minds were kingdoms," observed Gerald, smiling.

"But if they were kingdoms at all, those kingdoms would enlarge," said Marjory.

"Suppose we were the first people in the world!" said Gerald, after a pause, "come to life here on this silent hill-side, on just such a morning. What strange imaginations would visit us! It would be just the place to inspire a whole mythology."

"Such a mythology as the old Scandi-

navian one, perhaps," said Marjory. "Doesn't it seem to you, Gerald, as if one could look up at these hills, and all but see one of those mighty giants, resting after battle? And there beyond, in the plain, when the sun is setting, and bathing it in yellow light, might be Asgard, the city of the gods."

"I see a vision now," said Gerald: "A young man, with fair hair, flowing over his shoulders, and wild eyes: he is looking out from that height, towards Asgard. The giants stole him from Asgard in his baby-hood, and reared him among them, until he is almost a giant himself. But in soul he has remnants of a god, and he is watching the yellow light; and wondering why it makes him crave, as though it were his home?"

"How fanciful you are, Gerald?" said Lina.

Her tone had something of affection, but something also of superiority.

"But I see it!" said Gerald, with so intent a gaze, that Marjory, half startled, glanced in the same direction. Then their eyes met; and they laughed merrily.

"Listen to the echo!" cried Marjory.

"The giants are laughing back from their cave under the hill," said Gerald.

"I propose," said Lina, "that we each repeat a piece of poetry; to keep us from talking nonsense."

The suggestion was favourably received; although scarcely, perhaps, from the motive supplied by Lina. Gerald began with a sonnet which, he observed, had been long at intervals running in his head—

"O sing, clear Brook, sing on, while in a dream
I feel the sweetness of the years go by!
The crags and peaks are soften'd now, and seem
Gently to sleep against the gentle sky;
Old scenes and faces glimmer up and die,
With outlines of sweet thought obscured too long;
Like boys that shout at play far voices cry;
O sing! for I am weeping at the song.
I know not what I am, but only know
I have had glimpses tongue may never speak;
No more I balance human joy and woe,
But think of my transgressions, and am meek.
Father! forgive the child who fretted so,—
His proud heart yields,—the tears are on his cheek!"

"Is not that by Robert Buchanan?" asked Marjory. "Do say it again."

Something in those last lines had brought to her mind one who, indeed, was seldom long absent there.

"Father! forgive the child who fretted so,—
His proud heart yields,—the tears are on his cheek!"

"Why, what an impressionable thing you are, Marjory!" cried Gerald, catching the hand which she had raised to brush away a sudden tear of her own. She shook her head at him, and turned her face aside, that Lina might not see.

"Do you know 'My Kate,' by Mrs. Browning?" asked Lina, quite unconscious. "'Tis a simple little thing, but you may like it."

"She was not as pretty as women I know,
And yet all your best made of sunshine and snow
Drop to shade, melt to nought in the long-trodden ways,
While she's still remember'd on warm and cold days—
My Kate.

"Her air had a meaning, her movements a grace;
You turned from the fairest to gaze on her face:
And when you had once seen her forehead and mouth,
You saw as distinctly her soul and her truth—
My Kate.

"Such a blue inner light from her eyelids outbroke,
You looked at her silence and fancied she spoke:
When she did, so familiar, yet soft, was the tone,
Though the loudest spoke also, you heard her alone—
My Kate.

"She never found fault with you, never implied
Your wrong by her right, and yet men at her side
Grew nobler, girls purer, as through the whole town
The children were gladder that pulled at her gown—
My Kate.

"None knelt at her feet confessed lovers in thrall,
They knelt more to God than they used—that was all;
If you praised her as charming, some asked what you meant,
But the charm of her presence was felt as she went—
My Kate.

"I wish I could know some one just like her," said Marjory. Gerald appeared to marvel at his sister's obtuseness!

"Sometimes angels are entertained unawares," he said, dreamily gazing at Lina.

"Such heroines are more plentiful in fiction than in real life, I fear," observed Lina, in her matter-of-fact manner; "I learned the piece at school. Now comes Marjory."

"The other day I read a little translation from Uhland, which took my fancy wonderfully. Gerald, I wish you would illustrate it."

"Well, let me see whether it takes my fancy, too," said Gerald.

Marjory paused a moment, looking towards the plain. When she spoke again, her voice had an undertone of almost passionate sympathy.

"In a sunlit garden walking,
Two lovers go hand in hand,
Two shadowy forms, not talking,
They roam through the flowery land.

"They sit 'neath the trees together,
They kiss on the hands and mouth,
They clasp in their arms each other—
And back come their health and youth.

"Two little bells ring shrilly—
The vision is gone and fled!—
She lies in the cloister chilly—
He far on his dungeon bed."

All were silent for a moment or two, when the pathetic young voice had ceased. It was like a discord clashing upon music, when Lina impassively inquired:

"Where can be the use of writing, or reading, such a melancholy thing?"

"Is it melancholy?" said Marjory; "what an idea that is—of spirits meeting in a dream! If it be really possible, what an assurance of immortality!"

"I trust that we need no such fancies to convince us of our immortality," observed Lina.

Marjory glanced at Gerald. It seemed to her that he winced; but he said nothing.

The party were soon on the move again, exploring and resting by turns. The day sped by like magic. When the bells of Shelburn Abbey Church rang out five o'clock, even Lina was taken by surprise. A band

was playing in the distance, as they went back down the hill; the long horn-blasts wound, mellowed, through the still air. The herald glow of the spring sunset pervaded all things, and made the sky, as Marjory had said, like Asgard, city of the gods. Through the windows of the railway carriage, Marjory watched it, kindling trees and meadows, transfiguring quiet sheep and homely cottages. But before the short journey was ended, it had given place to the first subdued tints of twilight; and the air was growing chilly. The trio felt all quite ready for the comfortable dinner which awaited them at the house in Albion Square.

CHAPTER XXI.

"O God, O God! The great floods of the soul
Flow over me! I come into deep waters
Where no ground is!"—*Arthur Clough.*

"I WONDER when you will hear from that publisher," said Gerald, one morning.

The Easter holidays were over; it was a month since the manuscript had departed: but the delay caused no alarm to Marjory,—she regarded it as a favourable sign.

"A refusal would have come long ago. He is considering the matter. I feel more hopeful every day."

"I am the same," said Gerald, smiling. "You have infected me; at least I have more hope now, than fear."

Marjory laughed for very lightness of heart, as she went off to her little boys. The three hours of steady teaching did not sober her; when they were over, she ran back with the same joyous step. In the doorway of the sitting-room stood Priscilla, a letter in her hand.

"If you please, ma'am, I was just a-bringing this," said the high-pitched voice. "The postman overlooked it."

Upon the flap of the envelope a name was stamped. The answer was come at last.

Marjory passed on into her own room, closed the door, put down her books, and paused. Now that the die was cast, she dared not open this cover where her fate lay hidden. The distant roll of the town came through the open window; the soft air stole in, stirring the blind. Marjory could hear her own heart wildly thumping; her hand trembled as she severed that ominous flap.

"No.—, Paternoster Row,
"May —, 18—.

"Madam,

"We beg to thank you for the offer of your manuscript, which we regret that we are not able to accept. We trust that you will pardon our delay, caused by an error. The manuscript is this day forwarded, per rail, to your address.

"We are, madam,
"Yours obediently,
"_____"

* * * *

Was the world the same—was the sky the same—was she herself the same girl as one half-hour before? Oh, what a sudden blow! —for the moment dulling all sensation,—what a heavy cloud, blackening all life! Where could she go to hide herself and the note from Gerald? Gerald would be at home very soon. She thought of his countenance as she saw it last—the shadow lifted, the look of hope; his voice, with that cheerful ring in it, sounded in her ears. Instinctively she snatched up her hat and jacket, crushed the letter down into her pocket, and went out. She could not face him.

Quickly, past the cathedral, to the towing-path, she sped on by the river-side, towards Heathcroft. Her heart and mind were filled by a blank despair; all that she had relied on seemed to have vanished, snatched from under her feet. She was alone in a sea of doubt, amazement, misery. She had made a mistake, a life and death mistake. All this time she had thought that God was supporting her, was giving her hope and courage. Had He not pledged His Word to answer the prayer of faith? and had not she faith? blind, unquestioning—which had been deceived, awfully deceived.

Where was God? Where? Had he heard her, indeed? What did those Words in which she had trusted, mean? Was all a mockery? Oh hollow world! Oh, coldly-smiling sky! Oh for a voice, a hand to help her! On and on, beside the ever-flowing river, she went, past the warehouses and factories, past the stream of human beings who met her, one after another, one after another. Surely each of those faces had a stamp which she had never observed before; care — anxiety — sickness — sorrow—hardly one was utterly free. She thought of Hugh Vivian. She was very near him now, very near the black floods which had engulfed him. She heard their roar; she saw their hopeless depths. Where was God? How could she live without Him? She had trusted in His Word; and she had been disappointed. The world might say, "No wonder!" might call her fanatical, presumptuous; but her guiding-star had not been of the world. Far beyond that cold, hard world, that star had shone: had it shone only to deceive her?

All this while, to passers-by, she looked like one walking with an object—hurrying, perhaps, to keep some painful appointment. She was pale; a blank despair had chilled

the blue eyes usually so radiant. Presently, she had reached Heathcroft, following a narrow path which skirted the railings, enclosing a wide space destined for hay. To her left flowed the river, passing her—away, away. The human beings were left behind; here was only the still grass, slowly ripening. She paused under the friendly shade of a great tree which stood alone on the bank. Two hours ago, those fresh young leaves, musical with the hum of busy insects, would have spoken to her of joy, of hope, of never-failing renewal. But now nothing was joyous, nothing hopeful. As she rested against the trunk, her heart was like a stone within her..

Oh that she could plunge into the water, and be hidden, while the world went by above, and took its own course—which she had no power to alter. To lie still and forget her pain! and perhaps Gerald would work his way without her; and if she knew anything in those depths, she would know some day, it might be, of his fame. Such wild thoughts flitted through her brain, followed at length by tears; she had never shed tears so bitter. There was no healing in them; they were but misery embodied.

Presently, through their mist, she became aware of an advancing figure; a moment later, she saw that it was Mr. Vivian, in his quarter-master's uniform. He had distantly recognised her, half an hour ago, as she passed below the militia drilling-ground; and the instant that he was free, yielding to an attraction which kept him always hankering for her presence, he strolled down to the river, pursuing the path by which she had disappeared. Now, as he approached the tree, he saw her fair hair shining in contrast to the gnarled old trunk, her face at first hidden, as in uncontrollable grief. He was about to turn, and go back in silence; but at a second glance, he paused—hesitated—went forward.

Marjory looked up, met his eyes—those kind, dark eyes of a vanished fairyland; "a flood of thoughts" rushed over her at the sight; she turned away, struggling for self-command.

"Marjory—Miss Stanhope!" said Hugh Vivian, with a quick movement towards her, but instantly drawing back, his hand falling to his side, and clenched with an iron firmness. "Can I—how can I help you?—what can I do?"

"You can do nothing," said Marjory, low but passionately; "Please go."

"But—but I can't leave you like this. Are you sure?—I would do anything—anything in the world!"

Through all her wretchedness, his tone brought the blood to Marjory's cheek, and quickened her heart.

"Forgive me—I don't mean to be impertinent; but couldn't you tell me what is the matter? Indeed, I might find some means to help you."

Tell him! and how would he answer? Would he not say: "It is as I foretold. Prayer! that old woman's fable! Did I not warn you that it would prove a broken reed?" Yes; thus he would say in his heart, if not aloud. And she had hoped to convince him, to prove to him his error. How could she tell him, and sink him lower?

"No," she said, looking towards the river: "I must bear it alone. At least——" she paused, and her eyes, still wet, had unconsciously a wild appeal: "I and Gerald must bear it. If I could but keep it from Gerald!"

She mastered herself by another strong effort; then glanced at Hugh, trying to smile.

"Never mind," she said, as he still stood watching her, with a look as of some struggle at work within his own breast: "You are very kind; but don't trouble yourself. Please go home; and forget all this."

"And you—where are you going?"

"I must stay here for some time longer—till Gerald is safe in the bank again. I cannot meet him yet; he knows nothing of this trouble."

"But you will be faint from want of food."

"Oh, no, I shan't; I can wait. I shall sit down and rest."

She turned as she spoke, nodding good-bye to him, and went on a little way—only a little way—for she felt almost worn out. Very soon she sat down, as she had said, on the bank of the river. It was very still; all the Alton folk who were not at work, were at dinner or luncheon; she sat in a stony quietness—not weeping any more, only thinking. Now and then a water-hen splashed, or a fish rose and made a circle; birds chirped, insects hummed, a cow lowed in the distance. The sky looked very blue and soft, amid a rippling of gentle little clouds. On the surface, peace and beauty; beneath, misery and conflict: that was life, thought Marjory.

She did not know how long she had been resting, when quick steps came down the grassy footpath; and here again was Hugh Vivian, flushed and breathless, still in his uniform. He knelt on one knee beside her; and before Marjory, taken by surprise, could speak, a paper of sandwiches and a little flask of wine were unfolded, and laid in her lap.

"Mr. Vivian! How did you get these?" she cried, as he rose, and, pausing, looked at her with the kind smile that she remembered.

"I have not stolen them; so don't suspect it," he said, lightly: "I went up to the town. Now, at any rate, you won't be famished."

"But how good of you! and how quick you have been! how could you manage it so quickly?"

"Well, I ran part of the way; you see I was short of time,—and now I am due at the depôt."

He was off before Marjory, between confusion and gratitude, could utter another word; only turning to cry:

"Mind you eat every one of those sandwiches; or I shall find some way to punish you."

A real smile came in reply; and her heart felt a little, very little, lightened. It was a

commonplace matter enough; yet it recalled to Marjory that cherishing tenderness of devotion which had charmed the child of nine years before, in Mr. Hugh's intercourse with his mother. As the food and wine refreshed her, her thoughts recurred again and again to his long walk—run, rather—of two miles each way, through this heat, and in his heavy uniform. Afterwards she felt less utterly cast down; a spark of the old fire revived and stirred, though feebly, among its ashes. She sat long by the quiet river, thinking, thinking. It might be that this disappointment had been sent to "try her faith." She had read much in religious books of such trial, without perhaps deeply considering the meaning of the phrase. Perhaps this temporary failure was only intended to enhance the joy when the blessing came at length!

All at once she started to her feet. A sudden thought had struck her. She would go herself to the station, fetch her parcel, and send it straightway on another venture; and she would say nothing to Gerald.

* * * *

"Well, Marjory! You are a nice young woman. I come home late for dinner, and

find only Priscilla, who informs me that Miss Stanhope is out. I dine alone; then wait to the last moment—but no Miss Stanhope! I began to think you had gone back to Rockswold.

"I only went a long walk," said Marjory, smiling faintly.

"You are tired to death, I can see. I hope you had your dinner comfortably, when you did come home. And now I've something to tell you: I've heard from Mr. Harding!"

"Oh, Gerald! What does he say?"

"Marjory, you shall go no more such walks. Do promise! You look quite ill," said Gerald, anxiously.

"Never mind—I want to hear about Mr. Harding. I'm only tired, Gerald dear," she added, as he looked at her, still anxious, and somewhat puzzled.

"Well, you mustn't do it again, mind! Here's the note. It is to remind me of his proposal. I was half afraid he might forget, but he seems really to wish to have me."

Marjory contrived to smile once more; but the effort to speak seemed to choke her.

"I need not send a decided answer till September. That gives us plenty of time,

you see. Long before then you will have heard from the publisher. I think, after tea, I'll go down to the Square, and show the note to Lina."

"It is very kind," said Marjory, handing it back. She longed to be alone; her spirit was sick with a deadly sickness.

"Perhaps next spring," said Gerald, looking out—"Marjory, who knows?—I may no longer be cooped up at a desk, through all this heavenly weather."

"No; you may be free. I hope it—I do hope it," was all that she could answer. Within herself, again she was praying that it might be,—that it might be.

When the next spring came indeed, Marjory remembered sitting there, and breathing that agonized petition in her heart, while Gerald gazed into the calmness of the evening.

CHAPTER XXII.

"Ruins! Ruins! let us roam
Through what was a human home,
What care we
How deep its depths of darkness be?
Follow! follow!
* * * *
Ruins! Oh! ye have your charm;
Death is cold, but life is warm;
And the fervent days we knew
Ere our hopes grew faint and few,
Claim even now a happy sigh,
Thinking of those hours gone by."

Hon. Mrs. Norton.

It was the very weather for a pic-nic, declared Mrs. Carberry,—moreover, the very time—just as the militia was disbanded. A pic-nic was accordingly arranged by her for the day following the review, about a week after Marjory's poor story had again gone forth to try its fate. The officers were all invited—some of the younger ones postponing, solely on this account, their return to distant homes. To meet them, Mrs. Carberry collected a large party, the Peeles and the young Stanhopes among the rest. A ruined castle, some

six miles from Alton, was the rendezvous appointed, whither it was decided to drive in the morning, returning by water at night. Mrs. Peele would chaperon Marjory; Gerald, with a fellow clerk, was to row up the river after bank hours.

When the carriage, lent by some friend of the Peeles, drew up in the College Yard, it proved to contain not only Mrs. Peele and Lina, but Mr. Throckmorton, whom Mrs. Carberry, through divers manœuvres, had at length triumphantly secured. Foolish Marjory, always living for Gerald, seeing with his sight, feeling with his feelings, felt a sting of vexation, as she remembered that the carriage must have passed the bank, and that Gerald, like herself, had perhaps observed Mr. Throckmorton and Lina deep in conversation.

"Welcome, Marjory! Now I shall have some one to speak to," said Mrs. Peele, as Marjory, very fresh and charming in her white dress and brown straw hat, came to her place in the carriage.

"Why, mamma! what a poor compliment!" said Lina.

"Not at all, my dear. I never presume to interfere with you and Mr. Throckmorton,—you have so many important subjects to

discuss. Very proper, I am sure; but meanwhile I shall enjoy a little chat, less elevated, with Marjory."

"You'd better turn into an orphan, mamma, and then they would attend to you," observed Johnny Peele, from the box. "I forgot, though—you are one already! so, if I were you, I'd claim my rights."

"Johnny!" said Lina, severely.

"You must forgive me, Mrs. Peele, if I talk shop too much," said Mr. Throckmorton, with a pleasant smile. "One seldom finds so congenial a companion in Church matters, as Miss Peele; and perhaps I presume upon this."

"Not at all—not at all," said Mrs. Peele; "I'm sure I never meant my trivial remark to be noticed," she added, nervously; for Lina was regarding her with rigidity.

"Isn't it a lovely day?" cried Marjory, changing the subject. "The first of June! I hope the whole month will be the same."

"One can hardly expect that," said Mr. Throckmorton, smiling again at the eager girl. Something in his tone made her look at him more closely than before; and, as she looked, she ceased to wonder at Gerald's sensitiveness concerning him. His face was

very kind, self-controlled, earnest—thin and a little worn, but with an air of rest to-day, as if he were glad of his holiday, and meant to make the most of it.

"How you must enjoy getting out into the country for a few hours, Mr. Throckmorton!" said Mrs. Peele. "Those horrible Branksome back streets must be so trying in this weather."

"And yet I don't know that I could have a much worse trial than to be offered a country church," said Mr. Throckmorton.

"A trial!" exclaimed Mrs. Peele.

"Because I might feel, or fancy, that I ought to accept it; and life in the country would be very painful to me."

"But why?" said Mrs. Peele.

"For one thing, from the stagnation in church affairs; and, for another, I could not get on without plenty to do."

"But would not you have plenty to do?" asked Marjory, with diffidence.

"As to that," said Mr. Throckmorton, smiling again, "I suppose one might make plenty anywhere! But this would seem strange to me, fresh from the problem of how to keep the work from treading on one's heels."

"Yes, it would be sad indeed for you to be thrown away on the country!" said Lina.

Marjory was of a different opinion; but took it not upon her to speak.

"I suppose the military element will muster strong to-day," said Mr. Throckmorton, by way of passing to lighter topics.

"If you call the militia military," said Lina.

"By-the-bye, I hear that they will have to find a new quarter-master," said Mrs. Peele. "Mr. Vivian is going to leave Alton."

Marjory exclaimed involuntarily, then cut herself short. Lina refrained from more than a glance at her.

"It is merely a report, mamma. We have no authority to state it as a fact."

"Well, my dear, I heard Captain Morris lamenting it at the review; and saying that the whole regiment regretted it."

"There must be some good stuff in Vivian," said Mr. Throckmorton, who was chaplain to the militia. "He has certainly the power of attaching people; the men of the regiment are devoted to him."

"That is hardly desirable, I should fancy, his opinions being as we know them," said Lina, coldly.

"I have never found that he tries to spread his opinions," said Mr. Throckmorton.

What a blank there would be when he was gone, Marjory was thinking! Would their paths ever cross again, in the desert of the world?

At Mrs. Carberry's gates had gathered a motley throng of vehicles; a large break, rapidly filling, a high dog-cart with a freight of young officers, a wagonette, Mr. Carberry's barouche and pony-carriage, and two or three open flies. Mrs. Peele's party drove into the midst of a tumult of chaff and laughter, greetings and introductions.

"So delightful to see so many young friends!" Mrs. Carberry was reiterating.

"My dear, have we got all the hampers?"

"I don't know, I'm sure; ask Baker," said Mrs. Carberry. "You good Mrs. Peele, here you are! And my dear Lina too! We could not enjoy anything without Lina. And dear Marjory Stanhope! Oh, and Mr. Throckmorton! That is an honour. Truly kind. Welcome all."

"Jack," cries a young lady; "where's my sketching-block?"

"Mrs. Carberry," says another, "we've

brought our croquet set. There's a capital flat place in the old banquetting-hall."

"Very well, my dear, anything you like! We'll take another set. Baker! a box of croquet! Captain Andrews, you promised to bring Mr. Vivian—faithfully, faithfully!" cried Mrs. Carberry, shaking her finger at the dog-cart.

"If I could get him, I said, Mrs. Carberry; and I couldn't get him."

"You naughty man, I wish I hadn't trusted you!" said Mrs. Carberry.

The whole party were quickly in motion, a gay cavalcade, exciting interest among foot-passengers, and followed for some distance by a train of street-boys, cheering and shouting. Soon they had reached the country lanes, making strange clatter in the quiet places. All things were beautiful, with the beauty of early summer. It was too early for wild roses; but the hedges were white with may; the scent of lilacs floated from cottage gardens; and the orchards were pink with apple-blossom. Suddenly there was an outcry, and a clamour of voices.

"Why, there he is!" "What a sly dog you are, Vivian!"—and, from Mrs. Carberry—

"You naughty fellow, to steal a march upon us in this way!"

Hugh Vivian was walking leisurely along the foot-path. He stopped at the cry, and looked up, laughing, raising his straw hat.

"I'm sure you ought to be much obliged to me—or the horses ought. They are pretty well laden, as it is."

"No, no, nonsense! get in, Mr. Vivian, I beg!" cried Mrs. Carberry, her hand on the carriage door. "There is abundance of room, indeed."

"Thank you, I'd rather walk. I shall be there almost as soon as you are. I know of a short cut."

So, with many waving hands and nodding heads, they passed on, and left him behind. But Marjory had seen him look from carriage to carriage, until his eyes met hers. Lina had seen the same; she glanced at Marjory again; and, this time, her glance spoke volumes. Marjory did not much care; it was with a strange mixture of joy and pain that she drove on through the peaceful landscape.

Presently the road, crossing a bridge, turned to follow the windings of the river: overlooking which, on rising ground, appeared the hoary pile of ruins. The castle had been

of Norman architecture, commanding a wide view of the surrounding country. One massive tower still remained in good outward preservation, although ivy had almost choked the loopholes which lightened the winding staircase within. To the left of this tower the massive gateway, once containing the portcullis, and still almost intact, framed in the further view of ancient halls and chambers, laid open to the light of day. Their floor was now the green grass, their roof the sky; and the walls, which had once seemed eternal, were slowly crumbling.

The carriages drove into the field which sloped from the grassy ditch, once the moat, to the river, and disembarked their load. The silent place was soon dotted over with gay figures, and resonant with mirth, as the whole party mounted the hill, and passed beneath the gateway into the ruined court. Lina walked beside Mr. Throckmorton, Marjory with Mrs. Peele.

"How dreary!" said Mrs. Peele, looking about her with a shudder, "I should be frightened to death to come here at night!—or even by day, alone. And one feels as if the walls would tumble on one!"

"It is solemn," said Marjory. She paused,

looking up and around. These walls, grand in decay, seemed alive, though dumb. A presence, indescribable yet real, encompassed the place.

"I wonder what the old barons would say, if they found us making free of their fastnesses in this way?" observed a young lady.

"They would invite you all to luncheon, I feel sure," said Mrs. Carberry, waving her hand to where the servants were spreading cloths and unpacking hampers. "I have no scruple in using their dining-room!"

Meanwhile Mrs. Peele had been joined by an acquaintance, and Marjory stole away alone. Her mind was busy in the far past, amid possible scenes enacted in this very spot, centuries upon centuries ago. She tried to hear the voices, to see the bygone forms; she wondered it should seem so hard to realize that they had been.

"You are in your element, aren't you?" said Hugh Vivian, at her side. "You can dream and moralize as much as you like here—plenty of material!"

"I didn't see you come," said Marjory, colouring.

"I came this way," said Mr. Vivian, pointing to a low archway in her rear; "Just

beyond lies the entrance to the turret staircase, which is wonderfully complete, leading up to a small octagon room, once some lady's bower. I'll take you there, after luncheon, if you like; it has a glorious view."

"You know this place, then?"

"Rather!" he said, smiling. "As to that, there are few places I don't know about Alton. I might turn cicerone to the county, perhaps, if other trades failed."

"Luncheon! Luncheon!" cried Mrs. Carberry, tinkling a little bell. "Mr. Vivian, you seem bent on surprising us! I had no idea you were arrived."

"Really I had no idea that I was of sufficient importance for Mrs. Carberry to notice whether I arrived at all—much less the exact moment," said Hugh, as he moved towards her.

"You not of importance! Naughty man! when you know quite well that, seldom as you deign to oblige me, I think no party complete without you."

"I ought to feel highly honoured, I am sure," said Hugh.

"Sit down, then, and make yourself agreeable. We are all dying to hear whether Mr. Carberry is right in saying that these

interesting ruins were built by an ancestor of your own."

"I believe he is," said Hugh, carelessly.

Every romantic young lady of the party gazed with new interest upon him. Marjory gazed also, in surprise.

"To think of your never telling us!" cried Mrs. Carberry.

"Was there any particular reason why I should tell you?" inquired Hugh. "I give you a hearty welcome to my former domains, if that is your desire."

"Hugo de Vivian, elder brother of the de Vivian who settled at Copelands," said Mr. Carberry, from the end of the long table. At the name of Copelands, a slight shadow crossed the present Hugh Vivian's brow. It passed in a moment; he looked up in answer to Mrs. Carberry.

"Yes—that branch of the family was here till the Wars of the Roses, when the castle was taken by Yorkists, and the baron killed."

"And wasn't there some romance?" said Mrs. Carberry. "The Baron left a baby son, who eventually married——"

"His second cousin, the heiress of Copelands," said Hugh, as all looked to him for reply. "He was smuggled off to Copelands

by an underground passage, when the castle was stormed; and the family there adopted him."

"And so he got the Copelands estate—a splendid one in those days," said Mr. Carberry. "If he fell, he fell on his legs, that youngster! He was not without compensation."

Hugh's silence plainly signified that he found the subject distasteful; whereupon several tongues, which had been painfully mute, snatched their opportunity, and the conversation became general. Marjory's neighbours did not find her an entertaining companion; she had more than ever to think of now, as she looked at the ruined walls.

For the rest, as always in Mrs. Carberry's parties, care and sorrow seemed like things of a dream; she certainly had the knack of banishing their outward aspect. Chatter, merriment, and flirtation, was the order of the hour. Luncheon over, indefatigable croquet-players hastened to plant their hoops; chaperones pitched their camp-stools, and sat down to fancy-work and gossip; sketchers hunted for picturesqueness; others explored the ruins; a musical minor canon produced

a portfolio of glees, and enlisted a party for their performance.

Meanwhile Hugh, escaping from Mrs. Carberry, repeated his proposal to shew Marjory the view from the turret. She had a consciousness of Lina's eyes bent on her from afar, and knew that a lecture was in store. But if he were going indeed, she might never more be with him in this way. She would be happy while she could, she thought in a kind of desperation. Without so much as a glance at Lina, she strolled by his side, towards the archway.

The staircase, once vaulted, was now unroofed like the rest; and although on the side of the banqetting-hall, the wall rose to great height, on the other it was partially ruined, revealing, far beneath, a network of chambers, with here and there rough steps leading down to dark hollows—cellars or dungeons. Marjory, with her fancy for adventure, enjoyed the climb, aided on occasion by Hugh Vivian's strong hand. Presently they emerged on the octagon landing-place of which he had spoken. In front the stonework had crumbled away; a vast extent of country lay open. They might have thrown a pebble into the river, as it flowed imme-

diately below them; they could trace its course, "a silver thread," far on through the well-clothed meadow land. At some distance, a singular feature in this pastoral landscape, a tall chimney rose, surrounded by low buildings. Around these, for some space, the trees had been felled: even here, their forlorn aspect was evident.

"That is Copelands," said Hugh, quietly.

Marjory could not answer. She could only gaze, her eyes filling, a choking in her throat. She saw again, as if with physical sight, the fair mansion of other years; its park sloping below it to the river, its woods flanking it in summer glory.

"Do you see how the trees have been butchered? I remember, just about the time when you were a child at Thorne, I fancied that my father was too reckless about the timber, little guessing what was to come! I never knew, in those days, that he wanted money; he let me have all I asked for, and I squandered it without any thought. If you were there now, you would find a great bare place, dotted with hideous sheds and huts, the grass gone as well as the trees. That is a ruin of the present age, as this of the past. I fancy, if my old ancestors could come back

to their castle, the sight would pain them less than it would pain my father and mother to rise, and wander back to Copelands."

"This world is a strange mystery," said Marjory.

"You have found that out at last? Yes, Copelands is done for; and there is Thorne, the same as ever, and no one of the name to inherit it! Do you see it?—that white gleam among the trees."

"And the gray church tower. Yes, it all looks just as I first saw it from under the sycamore tree on the Alton-road."

"After Copelands, there has been to me no place like Thorne," said Hugh, musingly. "Even now I feel the better for standing here, and seeing it in the distance. But I must try to cast off this foolish clinging to old associations."

"It is true, then. You are really going away?"

"Yes, I am going. I have thought of it for some time; and now I have made up my mind. This very morning I sent in my resignation."

"Oh!" said Marjory, blankly.

She felt vaguely that a chilling change was coming upon her life; that the assertions

which she had read and heard of earth as "a desert drear" were true; that joy was a passing dream, after all. She stood silent, gazing towards that place so long her Eden.

"And you will stay on here, I suppose, with Gerald, and marry some fascinating Alton parson, who will teach you to look back on me, if at all, with a pious horror."

"I don't suppose I shall ever marry," said Marjory; "I never think about marrying."

"You are something of a child still, I verily believe! but every year you will grow older. Well, I hope, at all events, you will have a happy life, if I cannot. I hope I have not taught you to mistrust happiness?"

"Why do you say that?"

"Because I have noticed in your face sometimes, of late, a kind of response to my gloomy speeches, which is new to it. You must not pay any attention to my experiences of life; very likely yours will be quite different. I fear I have been wrong to talk in such a manner before you."

"No; I have liked you to talk freely. It is not that—we must all have troubles of some kind."

"I hope that special one of yours has

blown over?" said Hugh, after a slight hesitation.

"I—I don't know," said Marjory. Her tone was less hopeful than she intended. Raising her eyes, she met his own, looking down on her with real solicitude. It struck her suddenly, that she would lose a true friend when he was gone.

"How soon are you going?" she asked, somewhat abruptly.

"I can't tell; I suppose it will depend on how soon they supply my place. Shall you ever think of me, I wonder?"

"I thought of you often at Rockswold."

"And your thoughts now will be just of the same kind, I suppose. Well! I ought not to wish them otherwise. Never mind, we'll talk no more about my going; it is a hateful subject to me."

"Then why will you go? I have heard that the militia will be so sorry to lose you."

"The fact is, I ought to have gone months ago," said Hugh, sternly. "I have been a fool, and if I stayed I should be worse. There is no help for it but going."

"And where?" asked Marjory.

"Where? I haven't thought of that. Too

far to come back. You and I will probably never meet again."

"I hope we shall meet in Heaven, some day," said Marjory.

"A vague prospect!"

"It need not be vague."

"Vague or not," he said, with sudden passion, "it cannot save me from the craving to be with you here."

The words had escaped him; they were no sooner spoken, than he coloured hotly, even to the roots of his hair. Marjory, with quick instinct, seemed not to observe him, and turned in another direction.

"Some one is calling me!" she said. "It is Lina's voice. We had better go down."

"All right," said Hugh, shortly.

He led the way, and she followed—the descent, more difficult than the upward climb, precluding conversation. Below, Lina, detached from her satellites, was perambulating the court, in search of Marjory.

"How can you be so imprudent?" said she, low but censoriously, drawing the girl aside; "I have far more regard for you than you have for yourself."

"I don't know what you mean, Lina," said

Marjory. "Don't come with me—let me go —I want to be alone."

She shook off Lina's serene hand, and darted away, as an arrow from a bow. Hugh Vivian had disappeared, and Lina, having effected the separation, made no attempt to detain her. She ran off, round an angle of the ruins; a low wall stretched before her; she passed through a gap to its other side, and sat down out of sight. Here tears, of which she knew not the source, came thick and fast; the whole world seemed bitter.

"How can I live with Lina?" she thought. "How can I stay at peace with her? Either I must cramp myself up into something that is not myself—unutterably icy and narrow—or else we must be constantly disagreeing. And Gerald adores her! I must choose either to be separated from Gerald, or to—to—— Well, it is better that he should go away!"

"*He*" did not mean Gerald. The look in her eyes, the throbbing of her heart, the crimson on her cheeks, were not for Gerald. She felt a wild craving, a consciousness that she had it in her to give up everything—Lina's good opinion—Lina's? that was a small matter!—the whole world's—all that she had ever cared for, short of Heaven—only to

be near *him*, to comfort him, to cast in her lot with his; here, or at the antipodes, it mattered not.

For the moment, she had a glimpse of her own heart. She shrank from it, trembling.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"O cold one, and I round thee
Revolve, round only thee,
Straining ever to be nearer
While thou evadest still,
Repellest still, O cold one.

* * * *

The inevitable motion
Bears us both upon its line
Together, you as me,
Together and asunder
Evermore. It so must be."

Arthur H. Clough.

When the scattered party reassembled for tea, the hush of evening was stealing over the place. The cows in the field below the castle were being driven home; the birds were gathering to their nests, the bees to their hives. The deep blue of the sky was softened; the ivy on the ruins was stirred by a gentle breeze; the prevailing spirit seemed to have inspired the wood-pigeons of a neighbouring coppice, so full of rest was their cooing.

"But where is Mr. Vivian?" said Mrs.

Carberry, surveying her flock with small, benevolent eyes.

"I forgot to tell you, my dear—he is gone," said her husband. "He commissioned me to make his apologies, as he could not see you at the moment."

"Oh, but how ungallant!" cried Mrs. Carberry. "Why did he not wait to help in escorting these young ladies?"

"He had business at the depôt," said Mr. Carberry. "You know even young ladies must yield occasionally to business, my dear."

"Even, it appears, the one young lady whom Mr. Vivian does not consider beneath his notice," observed Miss Redburn, in a pointed aside, intended for Mrs. Carberry alone. But Marjory, at a little distance, heard no less plainly, and bestowed inward benedictions on an awkward boy who, at this instant, spilled his tea over her dress. The slight bustle thus occasioned might account for the blush she strove vainly to repress.

"Is that Mr. Vivian anybody in particular?" asked a loud-voiced girl, a stranger in Alton. "He seems an awful swell."

"Eight years ago his family was one of the first in our county," said Mrs. Carberry, in a sepulchral voice.

"A fact that he never forgets," observed Miss Redburn. "He can be pleasant enough, when it suits him; but he has always the heavy-swell air."

"Poor, poor fellow! his reverses have been great indeed," said Mrs. Carberry, still exceedingly sepulchral.

"Is not your pity rather lavish, Mrs. Carberry?" said Lina, who sat opposite Marjory. "People have seldom any but themselves to thank for reverses of that kind."

"Oh, my dear Lina! is there no such thing, then, as misfortune?" cried good-natured Mrs. Carberry.

"Persons are self-indulgent and extravagant, and attribute the result to fortune," observed Lina.

"True, true, every word!" cried Mr. Carberry, from the other end of the table. "But, surely, a little severe for so young and charming a judge!"

"Our dear Lina is somewhat misanthropical just at this moment," said Mrs. Carberry, nodding and making signs. "Never mind! I feel sure it is all right, my love," she added in a stage whisper to Lina. "Baker! do go and see if there is any token of a boat."

Lina turned sublimely away.

"Oh, by-the-by! Surely Gerald should have been here ere now," said Mrs. Peele to Marjory.

Marjory looked across at Lina, wondering if it were any subject of real concern to her whether Gerald came or not. Gerald himself, as Marjory knew, had for days looked forward to the quiet hour among these picturesque old ruins with his idol, and to the homeward row afterwards in the cool. Lina was listening to Mr. Throckmorton, who was recounting old traditions of the neighbourhood.

"A colony from the monastery at Evesham—" Marjory heard. "Part of the chapel is still perfect."

Ten minutes later she became aware that various enthusiastic young ladies were beseeching Mr. Throckmorton to take them—somewhere; she had not caught the word.

"We shall have time, Mrs. Carberry, shan't we? Oh, it will be so nice!"

"Plenty of time, my dears," said Mrs. Carberry, "if you don't go rhapsodizing, and forget that daylight won't last for ever. Mr. Throckmorton, I can trust you, I know. It will do if you are back in an hour."

"Where are they going?" asked Marjory.

"I thought you were somewhere in the clouds, Miss Stanhope!" cried Miss Redburn, with a significant laugh. "So you never heard Mr. Throckmorton's description of the dear, delightful, old, ruined chapel in the fields? He is offering to take us all over it, and explain its history."

"Throckmorton, you won't be mean enough to leave us behind?" said one of the young officers. "I vote we make a party of it, and hear him hold forth."

"Let the party be as large as it will," said Mr. Throckmorton, pleasantly, "so long as we don't forget what place we are going to see."

Marjory looked at him with growing respect, as he turned again to Lina, in whom alone he appeared to find congenial company. A general movement followed; every one left the table; and Mrs. Carberry's voice arose, lamenting loudly, as at this instant Gerald appeared.

"My dear Mr. Stanhope, come at last! How can I express my apologies? Here have we finished tea without you! but really we had all but given you up. And where is good Mr. Allen?—no—naughty Mr. Allen! for

he is not with you, I see. What! walked all the way? No!—Lina, Lina, come here. I commission you to scold Mr. Stanhope. Here has he walked all the way!"

Gerald, very hot and tired, was fresh from a series of *contretemps*. First he had been unusually detained, burning with suppressed impatience, in the bank; then, when at length he and his fellow-clerk had hurried to the quay, they found their boat gone on in mistake, with those bespoken by Mrs. Carberry, and no other disengaged. It was growing late; and Mr. Allen, who had no Lina to attract him, fought shy of the long walk; therefore, Gerald had come alone, fearing the while that he might, after all, be too late to row his divinity home. He had forgotten the existence of tea, and had tasted nothing since his mid-day chop at an eating-house. Now, as his looks made evident, he needed both food and rest.

"You are sadly tired, dear Gerald, are you not?" said Lina. "Foolish boy! why did you come, when the boat was missing? You should not have attempted it."

"Never mind," said Gerald, smiling. "I would do it again, six times over, for the same reward."

Yes, this was amends for all! How beautiful, how cool, calm, sweet, she looked! only to see her was refreshment.

"All's well that ends well," cried Mrs. Carberry, bustling about the table. "Now, come and refresh yourself.—Baker, the claret-cup! or here is cider-cup, if you prefer it. Boiling water, Baker!—Lina, my dear, I must turn over the tea-making to you. Mrs. Peele and I have to compare notes in this new stitch."

Mrs. Carberry thought herself very clever in thus paving the way for the lovers to meet in comfort. She and Mrs. Peele would sit near, to appease propriety; and, Gerald's hunger satisfied, there would still be time to steal away for a brief ramble among the ruins. She was thinking sentimentally of very old days, when she and Mr. Carberry had been glad of such small opportunities; and Gerald felt quite affectionate to the good-natured lady. She had turned to Mrs. Peele as she spoke; he and Lina stood alone beside the table.

"Baker is an excellent tea-maker," observed Lina. "Mrs. Carberry shall commend you to his good offices. The chapel party are just starting; and I must go."

"The chapel party! What chapel?" said Gerald, blankly.

"A ruined chapel, half a mile on, formerly served by a branch from the monastery at Evesham. Mr. Throckmorton has promised to escort us. I shall find you quite rested when I come back."

"And then it will be time to start,—and I shall have seen nothing of you! Why did you think I came off here, in the heat and dust? Lina, I was counting the minutes—and now are you going off with all those people?"

"I cannot lose Mr. Throckmorton's information," said Lina, with that quiet feature of her character which she mistook for firmness. "You are unreasonable, Gerald; but it is owing to your fatigue. Here, sit down, and Baker shall make your tea."

"What do I care about tea?" said Gerald, passionately. "I shall come with you."

He hastily filled a glass from the claret-cup, and drank it off.

"There, that's all I want," he said bitterly. "Now I'm coming."

"I think it is very imprudent," said Lina, with a serene expression.

"Then, stay with me, darling," he said,

his tone changing to entreaty. "Dearest Lina, stay with me, and let us have one hour at least together among all this beauty! Or, if you like it better, I'll take you to the chapel; only let it be alone,—let us wait a little, till all this crowd are gone."

"My dear Gerald! We see plenty of each other at Alton. I would not for the world lose this opportunity of valuable information."

"Very well," said Gerald, proudly.

Lina glanced at him in gentle concern, and, murmuring once again the name of Baker, repaired to Mrs. Carberry. A moment or two later, Gerald became conscious that this worthy lady was pirouetting about him, and talking—he did not hear what she said. The chapel party were walking away, in a business-like manner. Gerald watched them as figures in a play; Mr. Throckmorton's long black coat and clerical wideawake—the young men in their light summer suits; the merry girls. Lina had vanished in the crowd. Off they all went, across the grass, in the still evening air; soft hues were deepening in the west; a blackbird was singing among the ruins. Baker, the excellent tea-maker, appeared in an archway, with a kettle of boiling water.

"What! No tea, Mr. Stanhope! No tea? Oh, let me persuade you. You will really be quite exhausted,—tired Nature cannot endure for ever. At least some cold chicken and claret!"

But Gerald refused everything. Mrs. Carberry would have suspected a lovers' quarrel, only that he smiled, and was unusually pleasant, chatting—a little at random—upon casual subjects, with her and Mrs. Peele. She had never before seen the dreamy, silent young fellow so generally agreeable. She did not know that he had but little notion of what he was saying. He wanted only, by a proud instinct, to hide his pain from the world. Presently he said that he would go and scramble about by himself. Mrs. Carberry suspected a secret *rendezvous*, and signed and nodded, somewhat to Gerald's surprise.

He was resting, half leaning, half sitting, against a gray old buttress, a strange fire glowing on his cheek, and lighting his eyes, when near him, a little timidly, a voice said,—"Gerald!"

He glanced in its direction, and saw Marjory.

"Gerald, don't be vexed—I followed you.

I saw what happened; at least, I guessed. Gerald, pray don't be unhappy!"

"Unhappy! what does that matter? I don't care about that. It is——"

He stopped short, looking out over the fields.

"I'm not a baby, Marjory—nor a mere lovesick boy. I have borne plenty in my life; I hope I can bear plenty yet. But it is the fear lest I have been mistaken that drives me mad."

"Mistaken in—in *her?*"

"Don't!" he exclaimed, starting up suddenly. "I must battle with this thought! I can't stand it—it's a fancy of the devil. Marjory, you're very good; but I must fight it out. Go back—I'll come soon—go to the others."

As he spoke, he turned from her, and strode away; and she was left alone by the buttress. Of all the varied emotions of the day, this was the most painful—this heartache for the brother whom she loved. She felt like a bird in a snare, which sees its young ones taken, and flutters, and strains its wings, but cannot reach them.

When the missing party came streaming back over the fast-closing daisies, they were

all somewhat subdued, fresh from the combined influences of the sacred ruin and Mr. Throckmorton; who, all unconscious of the storm that had raged in his absence, looked full of meditative calm. Lina had expected to find Gerald watching, slave-like, for her return; but it was not until five minutes later that he came up in another direction, and, without noticing her, proceeded to relieve Mrs. Carberry of various unimportant items which, for reasons not easy to divine, she had seen fit to bring; and to transfer them, from the camp-stools and stones where they lay strewn, to a capacious bag.

"Gerald, dear, how sadly imprudent you have been!" said Lina, at his side. "Mrs. Carberry tells me you would eat nothing."

"It would have choked me," said Gerald, shortly. "Lina, I have something to say to you."

"Can it be that you were so childish as to take offence because I did not make your tea?"

"Now then! Now then!" cried Mrs. Carberry's voice. "Young people all! You will every one catch cold. Not one will escape. There will be a perfect hospital to-morrow."

They trooped away, like a flock of sheep, to the river, where the boats were waiting. One after another, as it was filled, pushed off. Marjory went in a large "four-oar," with a merry party, who did her good despite herself, distracting her attention. The river was like a poem, she thought; a bright sunset glowed behind the trees, and cast crimson reflections on the water. The oars sped lightly with an even splash; from the banks came more decided music—the notes of sweet birds, welcoming the hush and cool. The rich glows faded into softer lights; the evening star shone out; the moon rose. Some of the party struck up a round, which rang with unwonted clearness over the water. Marjory preferred to listen, sitting in the bows, in a dreamy stillness which, after the burden and heat of the day, seemed rest unutterable.

Meanwhile Gerald, far behind, was alone with Lina. It had been arranged, the day before, that Mrs. Peele should accompany them; but Mrs. Peele, being pleasantly engaged in conversation, had forgotten this, ensconcing herself in a larger boat with her friends. She remembered when too late, and looked back in perplexity at the receding

bank; but seeing Gerald in the act of assisting Lina's stately footsteps into the boat—which seemed to her alarmingly small—she supposed that all was right, and congratulated herself on her safer position.

Lina, however, had no desire for a *tête-à-tête* with Gerald. She would rather have left him alone to recover himself, as, in her mind, she expressed it. But while she looked calmly around her for Mrs. Peele, that little lady, at some distance, was embarking.

"Mamma has gone on, I see," said Lina, with perceptible annoyance.

"Yes, I am glad of it," said Gerald. "I should have no other chance of getting you alone."

Lina made no reply; and they were presently on the river—Gerald sculling in so leisurely a manner that the other boats were soon out of sight.

"That peep would make a pretty sketch," observed Lina, looking towards the bank. "I shall come again, and attempt it, some day."

"Lina, I told you that I had something to say. I shall be glad if you will listen, and take it in."

She glanced at him, struck by his tone,

and met his gray eyes gazing on her, not with their usual adoration, but deep in thought—thought not untouched by sternness.

"Do you love me?" he said abruptly.

"Is that all?" she returned, smiling serenely: for this question seemed only a new symptom of captivation. "That is not very hard to take in!"

"Perhaps more so than you suppose," said Gerald. "Lina, I don't ask foolishly. I want you to answer. I would rather know the truth."

"I should not have engaged myself to you without affection."

"Affection! I want something more than that. I have given you my whole heart, and I want yours."

"You are like Marjory, romantic and impulsive," said Lina, calmly. "If you expect romance from me, I cannot give it. I have always aimed instead at common sense."

"That is begging the question. It was very good of you, no doubt, to engage yourself to me—my best prospects being so uncertain, with long waiting, and perhaps little to come of it. That is the worldly point of view, and, in one way, true enough: you

have been unworldly in consenting to such an engagement. But then, on the other hand, you have always seemed to me above the world. And you may talk of romance as you like; but this is sober fact;—when two people really love each other, questions of money, and society, and so forth, are as nothing in comparison. What they want is one another; and so long as they have enough to live upon, without debt or distress, they will be satisfied—yes, and thankful. And if either is richer than the other, or might have made "a better marriage," that more fortunate one, if it be real love, will feel himself, or herself, doubly fortunate, because it is thus possible to give up something for the other's sake; I was going to say—sacrifize something: but in such a case there can be no real sacrifice. To apply all this to you and me, Lina, that fact—for, I maintain, it is a fact—goes far to equalize our respective positions.—That is, if you do indeed love me."

"I am at a loss to understand why you think it necessary to make these remarks," said Lina.

"I wish to God we could change places," said Gerald, sternly, "and that I were the

superior in outward position! Oh, if only I could be rich, or powerful in any way, you would see how I should glory in laying all at your feet! Yes, you are smiling—it sounds hackneyed—but God knows that I mean every word. And there may yet come a time—if I can have fair play—when I shall have something, even in this world's sight, to offer to you."

He stopped suddenly, and rowed on in silence, looking not at Lina, but beyond her. Somewhere in that direction, however distant, lay Venice and Rome! Yes, there, to him attainable, lay a treasure beyond the reach of wealth or rank. He seemed to hear the music of their bells, to see their streets transfigured in the sunset. Oh for those magic sandals which had carried Perseus so swiftly over sea and land! Oh, that this moment he could start southward!

Lina's voice, cold and calm, disturbed his musings.

"I shall be glad, Gerald, to hear why you have chosen to impress all this on me just now."

"Because, as I asked that question, it struck me that some might say—'You selfish brute, what right have you to set up such a

claim? She, who might marry anybody! and you, a penniless bank-clerk!' I suppose these few qualifying circumstances soothe my pride."

"You know too, very well, that I have never accused you of presumption. Indeed, the idea has not occurred to me; your family, though poor, is good, and can be traced for centuries before ours was ever heard of. I have mentioned this to my friends in speaking of my engagement. Then I always look forward to your future renown. Your talent is undoubted. It would be quite another matter if you were merely, as you say, a bank-clerk. At the same time, I always feel that there are things of more importance than money. I should be quite ashamed to look down on you because you happened to be poor."

"Yes, you are above such looking down as that! But, meanwhile, you have not understood me—no, I can see it—and I have had no answer to my question."

"It is such a very foolish question," said Lina, good-humouredly superior. "Of course I love you."

"Not 'of course' at all—the love that I mean—that I want."

"Your expectations are too high flown for reality."

"For ordinary experience, perhaps. But before ever I thought it possible to meet with one like you, I felt that it was not in me to be satisfied with any ordinary woman."

"Ordinary women allow their feelings to govern them, instead of governing their feelings. My aim is higher."

"In one sense, yes. But height is not coldness."

"The highest mountains have always snow on them," said Lina, proudly.

"But the sun is above even those; and there is nothing of snow in the sun. I have felt from the first that you did not love me very much; but I thought it would come in time. Lately I have had a horrible misgiving that perhaps it may never come. If it does not, if it cannot, it may be best that we should part."

"Certainly, if you wish it," said Lina.

"I wish it!" repeated Gerald, with a look of mingled reproach and passion. "The thought is agony to me."

"Then why go on in this uncomfortable manner?"

"Just listen, Lina.—I was counting the

hours, as I said, till I could get to you this evening. I knew we should have only a short time; but even that seemed worth five times the walk; and I fancied, fool as I was, that you were looking forward to it too. What with dust and weariness, the road seemed endless; but at last I was with you; and there, not caring one farthing for me, you were off to see some rubbishing old ruin."

"Gerald! you speak so of a chapel?"

"I can't help it. Just to hear a dry oration from Throckmorton! I tell you, if I didn't know you were above all that, I might have suspected you of running after him."

"Gerald, you are quite vulgar."

"I tell you I knew you were above it," said Gerald, passionately. "Above every kind of suspicion. But why did you do it, Lina? Why did you raise such a storm in me? You might have known that it would try me beyond endurance."

"Indeed," said Lina, "I had no idea that you were so unreasonable."

"Unreasonable! Good heavens! What fellow would not be unreasonable in such circumstances! Why did you do it, I say?"

"I have already answered that question," said Lina, frigidly. "I thought it a good opportunity for valuable information."

"Valuable! For one shilling I'd buy you a handbook which would tell you all you heard from him, and more. But it all hinges on one point. You don't love me.—Well! I could bear that patiently, and wait for it, as I have waited, if I were but sure—if I could get rid of this horrible doubt——"

"Pray explain yourself," said the lofty Lina.

"A doubt which has troubled me before—but specially to-night,—whether you have it in you even to understand the love of my visions."

"Visions are nothing," said Lina.

"The love that I feel within me, as a fact, at this moment. Your face—it is the face of an angel! there are heights and depths in it beyond my fancy. Surely it has not deceived me."

"If you mention deceit in connection with Me, Gerald, I shall be seriously offended. I have never in my life deceived anyone."

"Not that sort of deceit," cried Gerald, with sharp pain in his tone. "But you won't

understand! perhaps you can't: there is no use in talking any more."

"I think not, indeed," said Lina.

Then they went on in silence: while the sunset paled, and the music of the rounds, far ahead, floated back on the evening air.

"I am quite ready to break off our engagement, if you desire it," said Lina, with slow distinctness.

He looked at her, half mystified, half doubting; and, looking, his expression changed.

"I cannot give you up—I cannot," he cried. "My darling, let it pass—never mind—I won't worry you any more."

"And you confess that you have been in the wrong?"

"I confess nothing: except that you have enthralled me, heart and soul."

"At any rate you must remember that I cannot submit to be cross-questioned," said Lina, propitiated by his manner. "And now let us go to other subjects."

Marjory was comforted, when they met at the landing-place, to find her brother and Lina apparently on excellent terms. It was only afterwards, at home, that she observed him to be still preoccupied and grave; and

felt sure that his mind was not at rest, however the outward dispute might be.

Immediately after supper he went to the attic; and Marjory, waking as the cathedral clock struck two, heard him only then come downstairs on his way to bed.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"Truly He cannot, after such assurance,
Truly He cannot and He shall not fail;
Nay, they are known, the hours of thine endurance,
Daily thy tears are added to the tale."

Frederic W. H. Myers.

THE day of the pic-nic had been fortunately chosen; the morrow was rainy, — a gentle rain, but steady and persevering. The reaction from strong excitement weighed heavily on Marjory, making her school work burdensome. It was just over, and she was standing in the window of the sitting-room, wishing that rain were not a necessity of nature, when a cab, which had driven slowly round the corner, drew up in front of the door. Possible visions of Mr. Harding, of her uncle, flitted wildly across her brain; she stood watching, and saw the driver help some one out—some one who seemed ill or disabled. One glance: and, the blood rushing from her face to her heart, she turned, and flew downstairs.

"Gerald! Oh, what has happened?"

"Don't put yourself about, miss; the young gent has only had a bit of a accident," said the cabman.

"I'm all right, Marjory," said Gerald himself: but he spoke faintly, and, having entered, sat down on the stairs, as if in too much pain to go further.

It appeared that he had climbed upon some movable steps, to reach a high shelf in the bank; the steps, which needed repair, had given way; a quick spring had saved him from falling,—but in springing he had somehow hurt his knee—strained it, he thought; and the pain, instead of going off, had become more violent, causing faintness. Leave of absence was granted him, and he had felt at first revived by the fresh air; but, in walking, the faintness returned, and he was compelled to take advantage of a passing cab.

"I'm so thankful it is nothing worse!" cried Marjory. "I was afraid you were ill. You'll soon be better, Gerald dear, when you get upstairs; you shall lie on the sofa and rest."

"I'll come at once," he said, rising, with a firm grasp of the banisters. Aided by these and Marjory's arm, he was soon in the sitting-room; but the effort had been so pain-

ful, that he was once more quite faint, and glad to lie back upon the sofa cushions. A little cold water refreshed him; and he sat up.

"What a fool I am!" he said, impatiently, though with a smile: "I wish you'd just run in to Miss Pilkington, and ask her to lend me a pot of ointment, or something. She doctors all the little chaps."

Marjory obeyed, and returned accompanied by Miss Pilkington herself, who prescribed cold-water bandages.

"But, I say! how shall I get back to the bank, swathed up in cold water?"

"You can't think of going back to-day; 'tis out of the question," replied Miss Pilkington. "If you'll write a note to say so, I will send it."

"This is a bore," said Gerald, meditatively, when she had left them. "I was going down to Albion Square after bank hours."

"I'll go for you, dear, and bring Lina here to tea."

"What a blessing you are, Marjory! But it is raining."

"I don't mind rain; you know I never did: if Lina does, she must come in a fly.

I promise anyhow to bring her: and now I'll see about the bandages."

The cold water relieved Gerald to some extent; he was soon more free from pain. But his knee felt strangely weak, and in himself he was languid and somewhat feverish.

"If you are not better to-morrow, we must send for a doctor," said Marjory.

"A doctor for a strain! He would laugh at us. Besides, it would never do to make a hole in my instalment for Grove and Carter. I musn't leave too much for your wonderful book, you know!"

Marjory returned his smile, though at his words her heart sank. She had never told him! If a second refusal came, what could she do?

Lina suspended the lecture on attention to health, with which Marjory's wet walk inspired her, on learning its cause. She would not, however, for her own part, run any such foolish risk; and a fly was ordered forthwith. The flush of sudden joy with which Gerald received her far more than repaid Marjory's trouble. She retired to her own room, leaving the lovers alone.

Out of doors the silent rain was falling, falling; sky and river were both of one dull

hue; the Shelburn hills were blotted out in mist. Which was the true type of life,—this, or yesterday's bright summer? Marjory took up her Bible; it opened naturally at the passage she desired to see:—

"*Whatsoever ye shall ask in My Name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.*" "*If ye shall ask anything in My Name,* I WILL DO IT."

Yes, there it was! without possibility of mistake: a promise. So vivid was Marjory's realisation of the unseen, that while she read the words she seemed to hear the heavenly voice speak them—as other mortal ears had heard indeed. Taking time as a whole, it was not so very long ago! eighteen hundred years and odd—less than twice the years since our Norman Conquest. The same sky was spread to-day as then; the same sun was shining; the very ground on which He stood, when he spoke, was still existing in that land of Judæa. If certain theories of sound were correct, the very words might be still vibrating through space. And whose words? Some had called Him a Deceiver; but Marjory would have died the most terrible of deaths rather than doubt His truth. That Hebrew of the Gospels, the Divine Man,

was living still. He could not have forgotten the promises which He had spoken.

No; all was right,—all must be right. It was only that she must wait: just as an insect born to-day would have to wait till to-morrow, till the rain was past, before it could see the sunshine of which its fellows might tell.

When Marjory returned to the sitting-room, she found Lina bending over her photographic album, open at the page where Jessie's radiant loveliness shone from among the other faces, as a diamond among garnets. Lina, seated at a low table near the sofa, was looking intently at this special portrait. As Marjory entered, she just raised her eyes, and then continued the study.

"Marjory!" she said, suddenly: "Do you remember, last year, my remarking that I knew this face?"

"Yes; but I thought you were mistaken."

"I could not feel sure about it. But now I am quite sure that I have seen elsewhere the very photograph."

"Lina! have you not dreamt it?"

"I do not take dreams for reality! Yes, it comes back more clearly as I think. It

was years ago—before I knew you. The photograph was in a small album—a vulgar album, bound in mauve. It could not have been a lady's. Where was it?"

She pondered, her eyes fixed in concentration. She had evidently, for whatever cause, an earnest wish to verify these fleeting reminiscences. Marjory came to look over her shoulder, eagerly awaiting the result of her musings.

"Could you have seen it at Bullingham? Jessie might easily have had acquaintances there."

"No, it was not at Bullingham. I was somewhere on a visit; and I called, with some lady, at the house where I saw the photograph. Of the lady, I only recollect that she had black hair and a white bonnet! and that she sat on a sofa, talking to the person of the house, while I looked through the album. It was a little square room, clean but common, with a small round table and bead mats."

"That reminds me of the little parlour in Mrs. Hammond's lodgings."

"Lodgings!" repeated Lina. "Yes! A lodging-house it was. I remember. The lady had called to engage rooms for a

sick servant. Where could it have been?"

She pondered again, knitting her brows. Had Marjory not herself been deeply interested, she would have wondered at this interest on Lina's part. But her mind was full of Bellhouse, and of that terrible mystery. What if this recognition should lead to its being solved?

"Was anything said about the photograph?" she asked, as Lina gazed on in silence.

"No, they were talking and did not notice me. I remember thinking how foolish any person must be to be taken in her wedding dress. That is all. I can recall no more."

She closed the book suddenly, and moved her chair from the table.

"Why, you look 'quite in a way,' as Priscilla says," observed Gerald, who had lain silently watching her. He smiled as he spoke; but Lina did not smile.

"Think of all that might depend upon these recollections!" she said.

"Rather a weak 'might,'" said Gerald. "Probably the mistress of the house, whoever she may have been, was a friend of Mrs. Bellhouse, or of the girl herself, and the

photograph was given to her, as to Marjory. It is a curious coincidence, certainly."

"We may yet discover it to be beyond a coincidence," said Lina. "At all events, I shall keep it in my mind."

"I suppose there would be no use in telling Bellhouse?" said Marjory to Gerald.

"Not without something more definite. Unless, indeed, it were she who gave the photograph, the doubt and mystery would only make her restless."

"Besides," interposed Lina, "if there be any clue to search out, we had better keep our own counsel."

Marjory failed to comprehend this speech; and, as Lina went on to talk about other things, she sat thoughtfully pondering its meaning. Suddenly an idea struck her. Suspicions which she had striven to forget rushed back upon her memory; she recalled Lina's hope of clearing her family honour—at whose expense? There was a plan in her mind, Marjory felt sure, with vague foreboding.

But after tea, when Lina, entreated by Gerald, opened the piano and sang, the foreboding vanished. Marjory, tired, leaned back in the arm-chair, and watched, and listened. Almost she could have dreamed the old

schoolgirl dream, and thought Lina once more the personification of all that is lovely. Every line of form and countenance was full of grace, harmonizing to perfection with the music; sight and hearing alike were charmed. Marjory could not wonder at Gerald's absorbed gaze. He had forgotten his pain, forgotten the thoughts which yesterday had half maddened him. Visions of pictures, of fair faces, Eden-like landscapes, floated before his mind; and Lina was their invoking spirit. He felt full of anger against himself for having dared to doubt her—and not last night only, although of this no other human being was aware.

And meanwhile Lina, on her music-stool, was all unconscious of her power. Her attention was solely occupied by her singing-master's rules for correct intonation and expression; she was endeavouring, conscientiously, to do them justice, despite the inflexibility of the English tongue.

CHAPTER XXV.

"Well, it is earth with me; silence resumes her reign;
I will be patient and proud, and soberly acquiesce.
Give me the keys. I feel for the common chord again,
Sliding by semitones, till I sink to the minor —— Yes,
And I blunt it into a ninth, and I stand on alien ground,
Surveying a while the heights I rolled from into the deep."

Robert Browning.

Hugh Vivian was going away! This was the thought with which Marjory awoke on the next morning. It was not yet time to get up; and that thought filled all her mind. He was going away. Perhaps, throughout her earthly life, they would meet never again. Perhaps she would never know, in this world, whether her prayer for him were granted. She would be left, as before, with only a remembrance of him: but now that remembrance would be twofold. The young soldier, rejoicing in his youth, and in all good things of this world; and that dark and bitter face; with the cynical smile, veiling a deep heart-sickness. Which face would haunt her most? or would each alike appear as a dream?

Oh, to be a little child again—able to clasp his hand, and say, "Mr. Hugh, I want you to be happy!" A child who belonged to him, to go with him, to wait upon him. She wanted him; she craved for his presence,—his voice, his smile. Even that bitter smile—she had power, now and then, to lighten it. What would he grow into as the years rolled on? Would he harden still more in scepticism? Would he lose at last all self-respect, like some of whom she had read—and seek in evil, forgetfulness, if not comfort? Would he sink downward, and be lost?—he seemed already half lost sometimes:—and then, what of the next life? If she never saw him again on earth, would they meet indeed, as she had said, in Heaven? And . . . if not, would this longing ever be stilled? Would she ever be able to forget him all through Eternity?

Meanwhile, Alton was not Heaven! and what would Alton be when he was gone? What interest would have passed from her life! She had not known till now, how deep an interest. Always she had felt the consciousness of his presence not far off; had known that, whenever she went out, she might meet him; had hoped that some day

he might come to her and say,—"You were right,—I begin to see that all was for the best." Then she had been aware, though secretly, that she possessed no less attraction for him than he for her; that she was to him, as he to her, just what no one else was, in all the world: and this inward consciousness had imparted an unutterable sweetness to her life. His sceptical opinions formed, she thought, an impassable barrier between them; but it might be, although she knew it not, that the idea of this barrier had obscured the need of guarding her own heart.

Now, as she strove to realize her life as it would be when he was gone out of sight and sound of it, a feeling of utter dreariness came over her. She still might, and would, devote herself to Gerald; and, had Gerald responded as once she hoped, this would have given her comfort. But Gerald was bound up in Lina; she could help him only by working for him; and her work could as well be done at a distance. If she left him, he would miss her very little; and, when he did miss her, he could go to Lina and be more than consoled. Life and the world had grown arid, like Branksome in that fiery summer. Marjory longed to get away to green woods and fields,

to the speechless soothings of Nature. She would go back to Rockswold, she resolved, in a little while, and forget the past year like a dream.

At breakfast, Gerald looked flushed and jaded; confessing that he was still in pain.

"I shall be better at my work," he said: "Coddling will do no good. Pain is always worse if one thinks about it."

"But, Gerald, you look so tired! I wish you would let me send for a doctor."

"My dear Marjory, I never had a doctor in my life; our grandmother considered them an extravagance! and to begin for a trifle like this would be absurd. I can't think what makes me so stupid; but somehow I did not sleep: and my thoughts were hardly soothing. Work will be my doctor."

Marjory looked at him as he sat opposite, drinking coffee, but his plate empty;—and her heart sank. The sign of care borne silently, on that broad young brow, struck her with a pang almost physical. If she could but see into his mind, she thought! But she could only guess at the musings of that wakeful night.

"If only I might hear to-day that my book is accepted, and tell him of it this evening

when he comes home! He will sleep rather better, then!"

A short time ago the strong desire would have kindled a corresponding hope; but now Marjory had begun to learn something of the sickness of hope deferred.

"You are a little lame, Gerald," she said, as he rose. "Will not walking make it worse?"

"It is not much of a walk. My knee is stiff; but that will go off as I use it."

It did not, however. At night he was no better, and unable to hide the pain of which he, nevertheless, made light. He lay again on the sofa, and began a series of small designs for future pictures; while Marjory read. He was in one of his silent moods; and she would not worry him with chatter. When Priscilla, with the supper-tray, broke the monotony, he closed his sketching-book, and, folding his arms, looked before him, deep in thought.

"Marjory," he said, as the door closed on the little maid, "they are very long in answering about your book."

"Yes," said Marjory, blankly.

"I would write to them, if I were you, unless you hear within three or four days."

"Yes," said Marjory again.

"You have not lost hope, have you?"

"Oh, no, Gerald. Why do you ask?"

"You sound unlike yourself. But some time ago you thought the silence favourable."

"I will write at any rate, as you say, if I don't hear soon."

"I wish you would. I shall be glad for the suspense to end, one way or the other. It will be better for us all."

"For us all!" More thoughts than one were troubling him, through these silent hours. In her heart she cried: "O God! have pity on us, and help us!" But outwardly she only composed her face to cheerfulness, and talked of other things.

Gerald was no better the next day, or the next, or the next; and the welcome news which would have been his best medicine did not come. With a steady resolution which at times seemed almost obstinacy, he went as usual, for a full week, to his work. Every morning Marjory hoped to find him better; every evening she feared that he was on the verge of an illness. Miss Pilkington seconded her entreaties for a doctor; but Gerald refused to listen,—declaring

further, that if they sent for one without his consent he should decline to see him.

But at the end of that week, one afternoon, when he had dragged himself upstairs with frequent pauses, he sank down on the sofa, his face crimson, his brow damp, utterly spent.

"It's of no use, Marjory," he said: "I've done my best to battle it down; but I must give in. You may get a doctor as soon as you please."

"I can't tell you how glad I am!" cried Marjory: "Now you will soon be well."

And she ran off to consult with the ladies.

An hour later, a cheerful man of middle age, Robinson by name, was ushered in by Priscilla. Mrs. Myers and Miss Pilkington had extolled him as infinitely the best surgeon in Alton,—a reputation not new to Marjory. As he entered, he looked keenly at Gerald; and the penetration of his eye seemed at variance with the almost jaunty manner. Marjory followed his glance. Even in one week, she thought, Gerald had grown much thinner; he had plenty of colour, but his gray eyes were surely brighter and clearer than they should be.

But only when, after rapid questioning,

the knee was examined, did Marjory become aware of its true state. Gerald had said so little, and her touch in applying bandages had been so light, that she had not discovered the extreme tenderness of the joint. Now, under the surgeon's hand, he bit his lip and flushed, in the effort to repress any sign of pain; but one involuntary groan escaped him.

"That will do," said Mr. Robinson, resuming his seat. Gerald lay back, and the flush faded into paleness.

"He ought not to be so weak, ought he?" said Marjory: "It is only a strain?"

"There is some slight injury to the joint," said Mr. Robinson, cheerfully: "Nothing whatever to alarm you; but the knee must have rest. Poultices at night, and a lotion, which I will send, by day. I will also send a little mixture, to be taken every four hours; and the diet must not be too low, if you please. His strength must be kept up."

"He is not going to be ill, is he?" cried Marjory, in anxiety beyond control.

"Ill? Nonsense!" said Gerald, with a reassuring smile. Mr. Robinson smiled also; and looked the picture of good spirits.

"I anticipate no near change from what

we see at present. Please attend very carefully to my directions: I will call again in two or three days."

"But surely I shall be all right by then?" said Gerald, looking blank: "I must get back to my work."

"You have stayed at your work rather too long, you see," said Mr. Robinson, with a smiling nod: "Nature will have its revenge."

He was out of the room before Gerald, taken by surprise, could ask another question. Marjory flew after him.

"It is nothing serious, is it?" she said, her blue eyes full of trouble. Mr. Robinson seemed a little graver than he had shown himself in Gerald's presence.

"Don't alarm yourself," said he. "These injuries to the joint are sometimes tedious. I shall judge better when I see him again. Please keep up his strength in every way."

"And how soon will he be well?"

"That," replied Mr. Robinson, smiling again,—"it is impossible to say. Sooner or later, according to circumstances. Good afternoon."

Marjory turned into her own room, to struggle for the composure with which she

would meet Gerald. The surgeon's manner, his evasions, even his smiles, had filled her, despite his injunction to the contrary, with vague alarm.

It was on the following day that, returning from foraging for Gerald's supper, she saw at once that something had happened. He was sitting on the sofa, his knee up, books and drawing materials within reach, as she had left them an hour before. They did not appear to have been touched; he was very still, with a strange, fixed look. As Marjory approached, she saw an envelope crushed in his hand.

"Gerald, have you had a letter?"

"It is for you," he said: "Marjory, come here. I want you."

Without speaking, she drew a chair to his side.

"Marjory, can you bear a disappointment?" said Gerald. His tone was so kind, so full of thought for her, that she had almost broken down. A lump rose in her throat; tears filled her eyes.

"Oh, Gerald! I know—I can guess. It is my book."

"Never mind, dear," he said gently: "Don't fret yourself. It cannot be helped."

Then she saw on his other side, thrust into a corner of the sofa, the well-known roll of manuscript on which such pains had been spent. Gerald had not opened the letter; the parcel had told its own tale. But a wild hope shot through Marjory's brain:—it might merely have been returned for correction or alteration! She seized the envelope. No! Here was the same polite refusal, couched in almost the same terms as that of a month ago. She sat beside Gerald, motionless, dumb: he had spoken to her twice, before she heard.

"What did you say, Gerald?"

"I was telling you not to give up hope. While you were out, I thought it all over. We will try again. Even 'Vanity Fair' was refused at first, you know!"

No answer. She sat staring into vacancy, with a blank hopelessness which never before had been seen upon that face.

"Why, Marjory! It is not like you to be discouraged at the first onset."

"Oh, Gerald, Gerald—it is not the first. I did not tell you—I could not bear to vex you so—this is the second refusal."

She knelt down by him, and buried her face.

"Gerald, I can't bear it. It is not myself I care for:—it is you! And I prayed so earnestly!"

He said nothing at the instant; but she felt his hand laid lightly on her head.

"Don't fret, Marjory," he repeated, after a long silence. "I thank you all the same. We must make up our minds to it."

"To what, Gerald? To utter disappointment?"

"Don't call it that. It may turn out better than we expect. I hope so. But it is clear that we must give up all thought of my going with Mr. Harding."

Was it his illness—or what?—that gave him this strange strength?—that made his tone so quiet, so self-contained? Marjory raised her head, and looked at him, half in wonder, half in despair.

"But I prayed, Gerald—I prayed. I should never have dared to hope so, if I had not prayed. I can't understand it."

"There are many things one can't understand. You will have to accept that as a fact; I did, long ago. Your enthusiasm was infectious," he added, with a faint smile: "I should never have allowed myself to build on such a mere chance, if I had not caught

it of you! At least, I think not—I hardly know. Lately I have lived in a dream; and now I must come out of it."

"Is it all a dream, Gerald? Is the real world so dark and cold, then? Perhaps I have lived in a dream all my life: and yet—Oh, Gerald, Gerald!"

She clung to him almost convulsively. He soothed her, stroking her hair with a touch more like a father's than a brother's.

"No," he said: "The world is not all dark. But we can't have our own way in it. I fancy some of us have to be content scarcely ever to get our own way. Don't think of me, Marjory; I shall manage very well, dear. I was not quite unprepared. I'll write to Mr. Harding at once: then the matter will be settled. I was a fool ever to dream of such joy!"

The last words seemed to escape him unawares. They struck on Marjory's heart like a knell.

"Is joy really a delusion?" she thought. She would not say it; she would not, more than could be helped, vex Gerald with her conflicts. He had enough to bear.

"Tell me all about it," he said, after

another pause, with his kind smile. That smile did not seem an effort; it came naturally, at the sight of her trouble.

She told him the whole history: how her book had returned a month ago, and had been sent out again forthwith.

"And you have had this on your mind all that time? How brave you have been! I never guessed it."

"I meant it for the best; but now it seems cruel. I have let you hope on, to no purpose."

"Never mind," he said quietly: "It is just as well. It comes now when I have a few days of rest, and time to think things over. You must not look on this as an unmitigated blow, Marjory. After all, though I did hope too much, it was not all hope, by any means! Now, if you'll give me my desk, I'll write to Mr. Harding."

"Shall not I try just once more?"

"Another publisher? No, Marjory, no. There would only be another long suspense; and I could not stand it. Both these publishers are just and kind, you know, as well as wise; don't you remember what we heard of them? I suspect you want more practice

to succeed in such an over-stocked market. After all, there's nothing so very wonderful in a young girl of nineteen's not succeeding all at once, like a genius in a novel! The wonder would be the other way. I'm afraid I forgot your age: you were so sanguine," he added, smiling again.

"What will Lina say?" cried Marjory, hardly conscious that she spoke aloud.

"I don't know," said Gerald. "I must think,—I have a very great deal to think about."

As he spoke, he was opening his desk, which Marjory had placed beside him. He took out blotting-book and paper, and, with a steady hand, addressed an envelope to Mr. Harding.

The sight was too much for Marjory's fortitude. She turned to leave him.

"Marjory!" said Gerald, as she was going away.

"Yes?"

"Don't lose heart, dear—and don't give up your work. Perhaps it will thrive all the better if you do it for its own sake, instead of for mine. You may be a great author yet. Who knows?" he said smilingly.

"I don't care to be a great author," said Marjory, sick at heart: "I wanted only to help you."

She shut the door without another look at him; and went away alone.

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